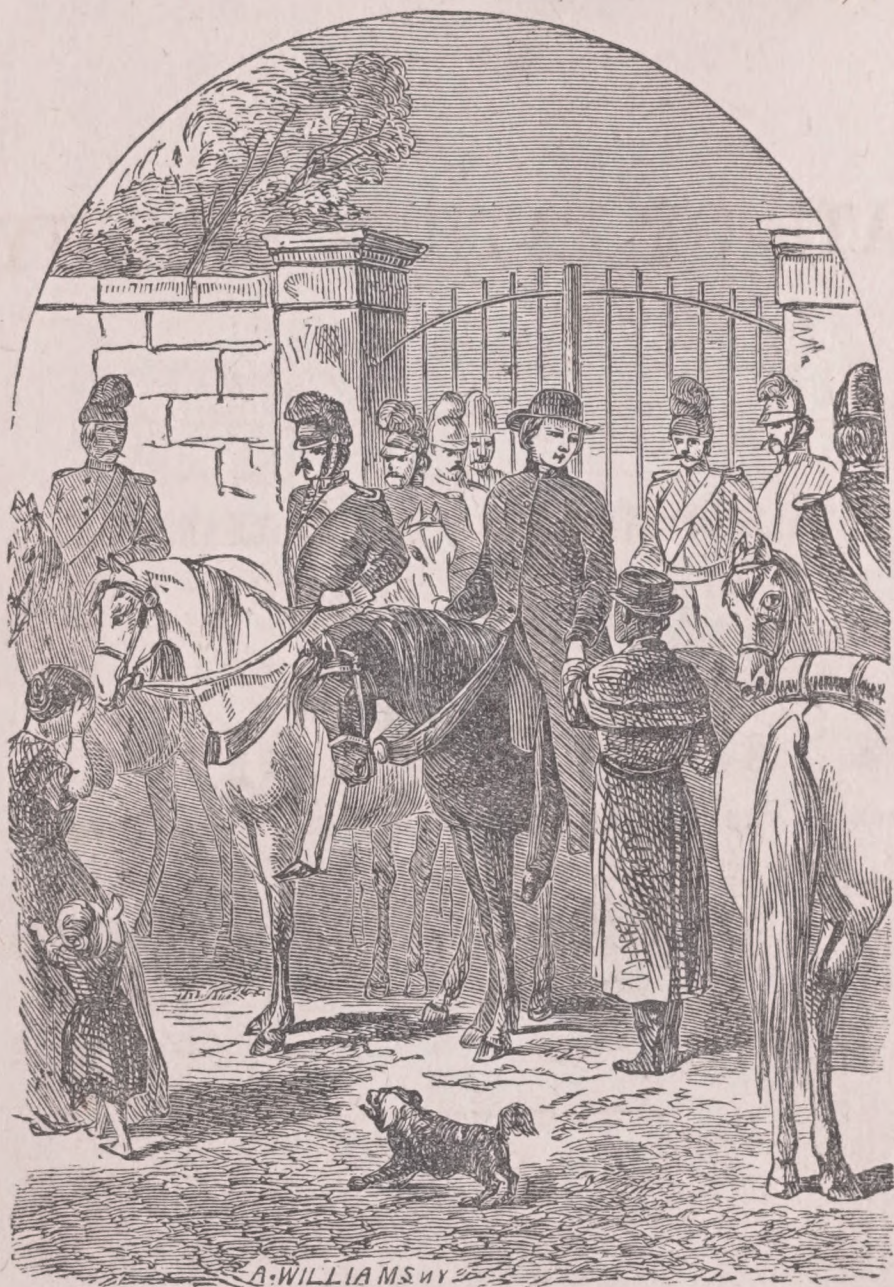


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Father Sheehy was then placed on a horse between two of the dragoons, and having exchanged a kind farewell with Mr. O'Callaghan, he turned his horse, as did the soldiers, and the troop rode off. (Page 41.)

THE

FATE OF FATHER SHEEHY.

A TALE OF TIPPERARY EIGHTY YEARS AGO.

BY MRS. J. ^{James} SADLIER,

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"BESSY CONWAY"—"ELINOR PRESTON"—"CONFED-

ERATE CHIEFTAINS"—"OLD AND NEW"—

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THE FATE OF FATHER SHEEHY.

WOULD that "the fate of FATHER SHEEHY" were only a legend—apocryphal, dim and uncertain—but alas ! it stands recorded on the page of history, and is inscribed in characters of blood on the hearts of the Catholic people of Ireland. It is one of the darkest and most revolting pages in the annals of any nation, and its memory hangs—a fearful shadow—over the hills and vales of Tipperary. The terrible struggle for and against Protestant ascendancy has long since ended, and the national religion—the religion which Nicholas Sheehy loved and practised, and for which he died—is again free to carry out its beneficent designs amongst the children of the soil; the lawless doings of the poor, misguided White-boys, and the still more outrageous violence and persecution of their enemies—their ferocious and unrelenting oppressors, have long been transferred from the stage of life to the historic page; but the doom of Father Sheehy—his noble resistance of oppression—his generous defence of the rights of his poor,

harassed, starving people—his genuine, unostentatious piety, and, more than all, his unmerited sufferings and ignominious death, are still remembered with intense affection by the descendants of those amongst whom he labored, and for whom he died. Dear to the heart of the Tipperary peasant is the memory of this devoted priest, and may we not suppose that it has often steeled that heart and nerved many a strong arm with yet greater strength when wreaking vengeance on the oppressors of his race. Vengeance is never justifiable, never to be excused, but it is at times extenuated in some degree by circumstances.

Father Sheehy was just such a man as the Irish—the *Celtic* heart most loves—warm, generous, and utterly unselfish—sympathizing with the oppressed wherever found, and fearless in denouncing the oppressor; the whole beautiful framework of his character adorned and enlivened by fervent piety, and the genial, heaven-born flame of charity. His very faults endeared him the more to the people by whom he was surrounded, and to their posterity in our own day; for they, indeed, “lean’d to virtue’s side,” and sprang, to some extent, from his real virtues. He was rash, and, it might be, reckless in exposing himself to danger—guileless he was and unsuspecting, and, therefore, incautiously regardless of the plans and plots of his powerful enemies. Had he possessed greater discernment of character, and practised even ordinary caution, he might have

escaped, at least with life. And yet when we come to consider the all but omnipotent power of his enemies, their ferocious hatred of the old faith and its ministers, and the unhappy state of the country at the period in question, we must conclude that nothing short of a miracle could have saved the ill-fated priest.

Father Sheehy was born at Fethard, in the county Tipperary. His parents were in easy circumstances, and connected with several of the most respectable Catholic families of the county. While yet in his early childhood, Nicholas was sent to France for his education, it being then a capital crime in those Penal Days for a Catholic gentleman to employ such teachers at home as he could alone entrust with his son's tuition. Catholic education was forbidden under the most severe penalties, so that the gentry, who alone had the means of doing so, were reduced to the necessity of sending their sons to Louvain or St. Omers, Salamanca or Valladolid. Of that time well might Davis sing:

“ Oh! weep those days, the Penal Days,
When Ireland hopelessly complain'd
Oh! weep those days, the Penal Days,
When godless persecution reign'd;
When, year by year,
For serf and peer,
Fresh cruelties were made by law,
And, fill'd with hate,
Our senate sate
To weld anew each fetter's flaw.”

Nicholas Sheehy early manifested a desire to embrace the priestly state, and while still young was admitted to Holy Orders. Alas! little dreamed the prelate who anointed his head with the consecrated oil that it was one day to be severed from its trunk by a public execution, and to moulder away, on the summit of a pole, a spectacle of joy and exultation to the arch-fiends of the ascendancy! And just as little thought the sanguine, light-hearted youth that he was destined to fall beneath the sword of justice. But what do I say?—*justice!* no—let me not so far prostitute that sacred word as to apply it to the fell practices, the nefarious arts of which he was the victim. None, in a word, could have foreseen Nicholas Sheehy's end on the day of his ordination, when he stood before the altar in the vigor and the bloom of youth, his fine oval face beaming with the consciousness of that mental power which he was then devoting to the service of his Maker—his young heart glowing with the love of God, and with charity towards all mankind. Yet had any one been able to draw aside at the moment the veil which overhung futurity, in all probability the new-made priest would not have shrunk from contemplating his fate—his martyrdom.

It was only a limited, and very small number of priests who were allowed to exercise their priestly functions, and as they were altogether insufficient for the spiritual wants of the people, hundreds of zealous young priests continually braved the terrors

of death and torture to bestow on the poor, suffering Catholics the consolation of religion. Of this number was Father Sheehy, at least for several years after his ordination, during which time he had been repeatedly "caught in the act," that is to say, administering the sacraments or saying Mass, or, perchance, instructing the people in the doctrines of their religion. He had been arrested each time and formally tried, but, by some means or other, had as often escaped conviction. He was subsequently appointed to a parish by his bishop, to the great delight of his parishioners, to whom he had already endeared himself by his firm assertion of their rights on every occasion. He was ever the friend of the oppressed, and the bountiful benefactor of the poor to the full extent of his limited means, and as gratitude is a prominent trait in the genuine, unsophisticated Irish heart, it was no wonder that Father Sheehy wielded a powerful influence over the surrounding peasantry.

But unfortunately for himself the same qualities that made him so dear to the poor, persecuted Catholics excited in a corresponding degree the hatred of their oppressors, the rabid Orange magistrates and landowners of the county. These men, amongst whom were numbered, to their shame be it said, several ministers of the Church by law established, were banded together in an unholy league for the avowed purpose of maintaining the Protestant Ascendancy, and forcing their unhappy tenants to

pay the exorbitant rent they choose to demand, together with tithes, church-rates, "minister's money," and various other assessments imposed on the people for the support of the English Church in Ireland. All these were wrung from a starving peasantry—the Catholic gentry were awed into silence by the fearful enactments of the Penal Code, still in operation, and if, perchance, any one of them manifested the slightest desire to assist his oppressed brethren, it was forthwith construed into "a treasonable act."

Goaded to madness by their accumulated wrongs and sufferings, the people began to associate secretly for purposes of self-defence, and also (we cannot deny it) for revenge. It was their only resource—so they believed—there was for them neither law nor justice—they were starving—trampled on and outraged in every possible and impossible way, and they sternly banded themselves together, resolved to make common cause against the common enemy. Had it not been for the exertions of the Catholic priesthood, there is little doubt but the whole country would have become one scene of anarchy and bloodshed, for the people were athirst for vengeance, and conscious that from their rulers they had nothing to hope. Yet these very priests were accused of fomenting rebellion. They were hunted from place to place, and, when caught, treated as the vilest criminals, in many cases put to an ignominious death.

Father Sheehy, then, had long been both feared

and detested by the Orange Magistracy of the day. He was looked upon as a troublesome man, a dangerous man, because he feared not to advocate the cause of the poor, and because his character for high-souled generosity and unselfish devotion endeared him to all the country for miles and miles around. Many an attempt had been made, as I have already shown, to get him out of the way, but Heaven had so far preserved him from the machinations of his enemies. Things were in this position when the Earl of Drogheda was sent down to the South in command of a large force, and established his headquarters in a place that has since become famous on another account, for

“ ’Twas in the town of nate Clogheen

Where Sergeant Snap met Paddy Carey,”

that the warlike head of the house of Moore ensconced himself for the purpose of watching the Whiteboys.*

On the very night after Lord Drogheda's arrival at Clogheen, when the tired soldiers were fast asleep, and even the sentries as they paced their rounds could scarcely keep their eyes open—when the silence of midnight reigned unbroken in the gloom of a moonless night, wild, reckless men were gathering in the neighborhood of the village, each group and individual as they met exchanging the pass-

* So called, as I suppose most of my readers are aware, from the fact of their wearing white shirts over their clothes in their nocturnal meetings and expeditions.

word of the night, and greeting each other with the secret grasp of sworn brotherhood. And why this midnight assemblage? why the low, hoarse threats that were echoed from mouth to mouth, and the stern expression that might be seen even through the gloom of night on every lowering brow? Oh! there was little need to ask, for the terrible white shirts, and the blackened faces, and the murderous weapons—guns and pistols, scythes and pitchforks—all denoted a fearful purpose—and that purpose was a night-attack on the newly-arrived British troops.

Some hundreds of men were assembled, evidently of the very lowest classes, judging by their language and deportment. They already far outnumbered the soldiers within the town, and still their number was increasing, little straggling parties of two and three and four dropping in at every moment. In the fierce excitement of the hour, and the increasing consciousness of strength and power, men began to lose their caution, and threats loud and deep were heard on every side.

"By the Lord Harry!" cried one gigantic peasant as he brandished a huge pitchfork, "we'll burn the town to ashes or we'll ferret the red-coats out of their holes. If they haven't put their heads in the noose this very day my name's not Darby Mullen! Come on, boys! we haven't a minnit to lose; there's work enough for us afore mornin'!"

Before a foot had moved in obedience to this order (for Darby was a man high in authority amongst

the Whiteboys) a hand was laid on the speaker's arm, and a deep voice spoke close to his side "Darby Mullin, whither would you go?—what is your purpose?"

Darby started as though stung by an adder. "Why, God bless my soul, Father Doyle, is it you I have here? How did you get so near me? How did you get in, at all, without the white shirt or the black face?"

"Oh! as to that," replied the priest, "the men seemed all to recognize me as I passed through the crowd, notwithstanding the darkness. But I ask you again, what is your purpose?"

"Why, then, that I mayn't do an ill turn, your reverence, but we're goin' to do a civil thing," returned the man evasively.

"But what is it?" persisted the priest who knew all too well that some desperate object was in view.

"Nothin' in the world wide, your reverence, only to pay Shaun Meskill's* respects to the gineral in the town beyant, an' to give him an' his men the welcome they deserve from us. That's all, Father Doyle, as I'm a livin' man this blessed night."

"Blessed night!" repeated the priest sorrowfully. "Ah, my children, my brethren," he went on in a subdued but most impressive tone, "you may thank God that I discovered your intention in time to prevent its execution, for I know you will not go

* This was the name by which the Whiteboys spoke amongst themselves of their organization.

against my bidding, when I tell you to return quietly to your homes. Alas! what a change has been wrought in you by suffering and oppression when you could deliberately steal on sleeping men—even though they *were* your greatest enemies—and murder them in cold blood! I know you might easily overcome these troops, with your superiority of numbers, your weapons and your sternness of purpose, taking them, moreover, unawares—but then you could not, or would not stop there. Your passions once aroused a fearful massacre would follow, and many of yourselves would lose your lives, whilst all who survived would be branded on heart and brow as murderers—the jails throughout the country would be filled to overflowing with doomed wretches, and your enemies would rejoice in your having criminated yourselves beyond forgiveness. No, my poor fellows! do not this foul thing! Stain not your souls with this heinous crime, which, so far from amending your condition, would but make it an hundred times worse. Be advised by me and return to your homes. To-morrow you will rejoice for having obeyed me!”

A murmur of dissatisfaction ran through the crowd.

“Ay! that’s always how it is!” growled Darby, who evidently spoke the feelings of his comrades, “they’ll never let us have our own way; if they did, its altered times we’d have, for we’d drive the red-coats an’ the rascally landlords, an’ the parsons

an' the procthors into the say. I tell you, Father Doyle, we'll not be said by you this time!"

"But I command you as a priest of the Lord not to commit this black, cowardly crime!"

"Ay!" shouted more than one hoarse voice, as if the speakers were glad to catch hold of any feasible excuse for evading the obnoxious command; "ay! but you're not *our* priest—there's none of the Ard-finnan boys here the night, an' Father Sheehy, long life to him! isn't to the fore to prevent us. An' maybe if he was atself he wouldn't say again us!"

"I tell you," replied the priest, "I left Father Sheehy not half an hour since—he is somewhat indisposed or he would have been with me here, but it was he who informed me of your intentions and begged me to hasten hither. Thank God!" he fervently added, "thank God! I am not too late!"

Meanwhile the crowd had been thickening more and more, and, whether by accident or design, had moved considerably nearer the town. This the priest saw, and placing himself on the road right in front of the ringleaders, he extended his arms towards the people, his back being turned towards the village.

"Once more I command you," he cried with thrilling solemnity, "and adjure you by the love you bear your country and your religion, to turn back while yet your hands are unstained with blood! Do what you propose to do and the curse of God shall fall

heavily on you and yours; do *my* bidding, and you will have my blessing and the blessing of God!"

A backward motion of the crowd was suddenly perceptible. Wild and lawless as the poor fellows were, there was not one who did not shrink from the dread alternative proposed by the priest, that of disobeying him and incurring God's anger. For a moment there was a sullen murmur of disapprobation; then grumbling voices were heard reproaching the priest with having come between them and revenge. But Father Doyle saw that he had gained his point and silently awaited the result. Very soon the crowd began to diminish—white shirts were seen through the darkness straggling over the common in all directions, and in half an hour from his appearance amongst the Whiteboys, Father Doyle stood alone on the midnight waste, with hands clasped and head bowed down, and tears streaming from his aged eyes.

"Thanks be to Thee, O God!" he murmured, "thanks that Thou hast permitted me to save these poor unhappy men from the commission of a crime which would only render their miserable existence more wretched still. When, O my God! when wilt Thou vouchsafe to lighten their heavy load? When shall their faithfulness be rewarded and their temptations become less grievous? how long are they still to suffer—how long, O Lord! how long?" And then the old man slowly turned and retraced his

steps to the house where he had left Father Sheehy in bed.

When Father Doyle related the foregoing scene, his brother-priest raised himself quickly on his arm. "Well! I am thankful to God and to you," he said, "that you have succeeded—and yet—and yet if ever men were warranted in taking the law into their own hands, it would be these very men! I declare to you, friend!" he added warmly, "I can hardly blame them, for I believe they have shown more forbearance than any people ever did before under the same circumstances. From my heart I pity them, and I would willingly lay down my life to better their condition."

"Nobody doubts it, man, nobody doubts it," returned Father Doyle with a good-humored smile. "But now," he added, "you must lie down and be still. I'll go and look for a bed in some other part of the house. Good night, and God bless you!"

A few days after, on a raw cold evening, as the rector of the parish, the Rev. John Hewitson by name, reclined luxuriously in an easy chair before his parlor fire, sipping occasionally the contents of a beautiful silver tankard which stood on a small table at his right hand, his burly form encased in a dressing-gown of rich brocade, and his round red face glowing with the fumes of the generous wine and the heat of the coal fire before him, a tap was heard at the door, and instantly his own servant ushered in a woman wrapped up in an old grey cloak

the hood of which was thrown over her head so as almost to conceal her face.

Dropping a low curtsey and a "sarvent, sir!" she remained standing near the door, which the servant still held half open in his hand, while the minister regarded the intruder with a scowling glance of inquiry. At last he spoke: "I say, Lanty, who is this person?"

"The divil a know *I* know, sir! askin' your reverence's pardon, for it's mighty careful she is about lettin her face be seen. She says she has private business with your reverence." So saying Lanty closed the door with a waggish leer on his thin sharp features.

"Well, my good woman," said the portly rector, "what is your business with me? You had better be quick, as my time is exceedingly precious!"

"I suppose your reverence has heard of the wonderful great meetin' that took place the other night on the commons abroad," began the woman in a bold, confident tone.

"Of course I have, but what of that?"

"Why, nothing, plase your honor, only I thought you might be wantin' witnesses for the thrials."

"Wanting witnesses!" repeated the rector slowly, as he eyed the muffled figure still more closely; "why, yes, we are always on the lookout for respectable evidence, seeing that many undoubted criminals do escape in these unhappy days for want of evidence. Of course, my good woman, we are

most *anxious* to procure witnesses—always provided they be of decent character. Mind that, I say!”

“To be sure, your reverence, to be sure! I know it’s dacent witnesses you want, an’ that’s why I come to offer *myself*.”

“And who may *you* be,” inquired the rector, “who are so willing to run the risk of telling the truth at a time when we can scarcely find one individual bold enough to come forward and give testimony?”

“My name is McCarthy, your honor’s reverence—Ann McCarthy, sir, an’ I’ll make bould to say you’ll not get a betther witness in all Tipperary, for I wouldn’t be a bit daunted if the judge himself was to question me on the table. Troth, I wouldn’t, sir, an’ it isn’t many could say that for themselves.”

“Well! well!” said Hewitson, cutting her self-laudation short, “but against whom can you, or will you swear?”

“Why, to be sure, I’ll swear against any one you please”—but seeing the rector frown she quickly added—“the priest, sir, for one!”

“The priest?” cried the rector starting from his chair, “what priest?”

“Ay! there it is—what priest does your reverence think it is?”

“Sheehy—is it not?” inquired the churchman in an eager tone, alternating between hope and fear.

“Why, who else should it be, an’ plase your rever-

once?—who else is at the bottom of all these doings?"

Hewitson grasped the bell with a trembling hand, and pulled it with nervous haste. Lanty was not slow in appearing, when his master ordered him to have the groom saddle a horse, and ride over with a message to Sir Thomas Maude. Lanty lingered a moment and contrived to get round in front of the woman, so as to have a view of her face, which was now somewhat more exposed. One glance was enough, and with a slight nod, as though he said to himself, "It's just as I thought," he was about to leave the room, when he heard his master say :

"So, Mistress Ann McCarthy, you can plump it home against him?"

"Mistress Ann McCarthy!" repeated Lanty with a low, chuckling laugh, "oh, then, the divil a bone of a McCarthy is in her skin. Why, your reverence, it's *Moll Dunlea* that's under the hood—sorra one else. Sure I got a peep at her face this very minnit, an' I'd know her squint among a thousand. Mistress Ann, inagh! oh, then, faith, she's takin' your reverence to the fair, as she took many a one before now!"

"Silence, you scoundrel!" cried his master angrily, "I suppose the decent woman has her reasons for concealing her real name. Go and do what I told you!"

"In coorse I will, sir!" and Lanty sidled out of the room, muttering, "dacent woman! wisha, then, what'll the world come to, at last?"

"And now, honest woman," said the rector apparently oblivious of Lanty's discovery, "may I ask what it is that induces you to inform against this plotting priest? Are you a papist?"

"Wisha, troth," was the answer, "I don't bother my head about religion one way or the other—all's alike to me. But, for your honor's question," she hastily added, "sure they tell me you're givin' *fifty pounds* and a new shuit from top to toe—that's what I call dacent pay!" And the respectable witness that was to be perpetrated a knowing wink with her left eye.

"But I suppose you are aware, my good woman, that we have *one* witness already?"

"Faith I do know it well, but he's not worth a *traneen*. In coorse, it's the *omadhaun*, John Bridge, you mane—him that's in for Whiteboyism; an' I hear Mr. Bagwell got him to inform by the hardest of treatment. Sure *his* oath isn't worth much, the creature!"

"I'm thinkin' it's worth as much as yours, Moll," observed our friend Lanty, who, under pretence of stirring up the fire, had again made his appearance. "Of the two, I think *his* is the best, fool an' all as he is, for every one knows what makes *you* hard on the priest, an' even if your charackter was betther than it is, people 'ill be sayin' that it's spite makes you swear, so your oath isn't worth a button!"

"Why, what do you mane, you blackguard?" cried Moll, as, throwing back her hood, she turned a

pair of squinting eyes on Lanty. "Haven't you the divil's own impudence to talk to me in the way you do?"

"An' haven't you the assurance of the same ould gentleman to go up on a table an' swear agin the priest—let him be as he may—when everybody knows that you did it for revenge?"

"For revenge, Lanty! how is that?" inquired the rector, his curiosity a little excited.

"Why, your reverence, it seems Father Sheehy put her out o' the chapel, or cursed her, or something that way, on account o' the bad life she led, an' ever since she's on the watch to do him an ill turn. Troth, sir, she's no great shakes to bring up for a witness!"

"An' what would his reverence expect, you leprehaun?" retorted Moll fiercely. "Who would he get, do you think, to swear agin a priest, only some poor outlawed creature like myself. If I'm not good enough for such dirty work as that, I'm not good for anything. So give me no more o' your impudence, now, or the divil a swear I'll swear; an' then his reverence, an' Sir Thomas, an' the rest o' the gentlemen may go look for dacenter witnesses. On or off, Mr. Hewitson?—an' mind if I'm to do the business, sir, you must keep ould hatchet-face there out o' the room while I'm in it, for he's just talkin' that way for contradiction—nothing else. He hates the priest as much as you do, but he wants to taunt me the ill-conditioned rascal."

Lanty was accordingly dismissed, and Sir Thomas soon after coming in, the good news was speedily communicated to him, whereat he rejoiced exceedingly, "for," said he with a vinegar smile which admirably suited his long, lank visage, "for now we have this popish priest under our thumb, and if it be not our own fault he cannot escape us. I think, Hewitson, you had better place this worthy woman under arrest—if you have no objection," he added, addressing the witness.

"Divil a hair *I* care where I am," responded Moll carelessly, "if you'll only allow me enough of whiskey and tobaccy to pass the time. All's one to Moll Dunlea, if she only gets the nourishment."

Being assured that she would have whatever she desired, Moll dropped a low curtsey, and then marched off between two servants who were deputed to lock her up, while the two gentlemen, drawing their chairs near the fire, sat down to discuss their brightening prospects over a fresh supply of claret.

On the following day a small detachment of soldiers was sent out in quest of Father Sheehy, but their search was, for the time, unsuccessful. He had said Mass that morning in his sister's house, but long before the soldiers reached there he was concealed in a neighboring cottage, a quantity of straw being heaped against the door of a sort of cellar wherein he was placed. For many days the search was repeated, and as often did the generous, grate-

ful peasantry succeed in hiding their beloved pastor from the all-piercing eyes of his persecutors. They took it in turn to watch the motions of the soldiery when out on his trail, and the most ingenious stratagems were employed by them to screen him from discovery. Sometimes he narrowly escaped being caught, for his haunts began to be known, and at last a proclamation was issued to the effect that any one who should henceforward harbor or assist him in any way, should be treated as an accomplice in his crimes. This threat made a fearful impression on the minds of the people, so that many began to shrink from lodging the persecuted priest, while he himself was unwilling to compromise their safety, so that he would remain whole days and nights hidden amongst the brushwood in the depth of a thicket—stealing at night to some friendly homestead to procure refreshment.

One evening he determined to make his way to the house of a farmer at the very extremity of his parish joining that of Ardfinan. Intelligence had reached him that the farmer's wife, a pious, good woman, was at the point of death, and though strongly urged not to go, he declared that nothing should prevent him from doing his duty.

"No," said he to his brother-in-law, Thomas Burke, "Ally Boyce shall not die without the rites of the Church, if I can only reach her alive. Many a time has she ministered to my wants, and sheltered me from the enemy, since I have been a houseless

wanderer, and, with God's help, I'll not desert her now in her hour of need. God's blessing be with you, Thomas," and he wrung the outstretched hand with even unusual warmth, "I won't say good-bye to Kitty, for I know she'd be only trying to persuade me not to go. Give her my love, anyhow, and should you never see me again in life, don't forget me in your prayers. So now here goes in God's name!"

"But, for God's sake, Father Nicholas dear, let me go with you!" said Burke entreatingly, "it's wearing late, and you have a long road to travel."

"Not for the world, Tom, not for the world would I consent to what you propose. Remember your wife and children, and that, after God, your first duty is to them. Not a step farther, I insist upon it—if there be danger, I will meet it alone." And gently pushing his brother-in-law into the house, he closed the door, and making the sign of the cross upon his forehead and breast, walked swiftly away through the deepening gloom of twilight. The roads were deserted as he passed along, for, unless on a night when the Whiteboys held a meeting or went out on an excursion, not a soul ventured, or dared venture, to leave their homes without actual necessity. "It is not very likely that the soldiers are about to-night," muttered the priest to himself, "and it is so far best, for I see the lady-moon begins to show her fair face over yonder hill. I must strike

off through the field, however, for I am doubly exposed to danger on the high road."

He had already got within a mile of the house, when, forgetting his caution for a moment, he sprang over a stile and dashed along a narrow bridle-road or boreen which he knew to be a short-cut to Boyce's house. The road was shaded on one side by a high hawthorn hedge, and he had only advanced a few paces when he was made sensible of his indiscretion by the sight of three men who stood close to the bushes where the shade was deepest. He was moving on, without appearing to notice them, when one of them called out :

"Why, then, Father Sheehy, is it yourself that's in it? What's your hurry this fine evening?"

"Maybe his reverence is goin' over to the Glebe to pay a visit to the rector," said another jeeringly.

"Well! at any rate, it's like he can take time to give us his blessin'," suggested the third, and all three laughed uproariously.

"Really, my friends, you have the advantage of me," said the priest, still hastening on, but two of the men quickly seized him by either arm, while the third walked close behind.

"Fellows!" said Father Sheehy aloud, "what is the meaning of this? whither would you take me?"

"Oh! then, you'll soon know that, priest darlin'! we'll not keep you long in the dark about it. But stir yourself, man alive, or we'll have to give you a touch of what you won't relish. If you knew but

all, we're going to pay you great respect entirely, for in a few minutes we'll introduce you to one o' the king's officers. It's truth I tell you, sir, though you don't seem to b'lieve a word of it—an' sure that's no wonder, anyhow, for it's an honor no popish priest could ever expect."

Father Sheehy was silent—he was meditating on the chances of escape, and looking eagerly for an opportunity to make a bold attempt. His captors had struck into the high road, and were rapidly approaching a ruinous building which had once been a comfortable farm-house. The moon was now high in the firmament, and her silvery light shed a glory over the sleeping landscape, imparting a spectral look, however, to the shattered walls and frameless windows of the ruin.

"Wouldn't that be a fine place, now, for the rascally Whiteboys to hide in?" said one of the men in a low voice, as though he really had some misgivings on the subject. "But, then, they're too cowardly to come abroad in the moonlight—they're like the owls, an' only venture out in the dark."

By this time they were full in front of the ruins, the gaping doorway of which was dark as a churchyard vault, when a sort of commotion was heard within.

"Shaun Meskill forever!—up, boys, and at them!" shouted a hoarse, suppressed voice in Irish, and at the well-known sounds the ruffians who held the priest turned pale as ashes. A loud noise was

heard within the building—a man in a white shirt stood in the dark doorway, and, as though terror-stricken by this confirmation of their fears, the fellows flung the priest from them, and exclaiming, “there he is, if it’s him you want!” they ran off as fast as their limbs would carry them, nor ventured once to look back till they came up with the party of soldiers who were out in search of the priest. Had they cast a look behind they would have seen nothing to justify their fears, and the loud laugh that echoed from the ruin as a stalwart arm drew the priest in, would perchance have lessened their apprehensions.

“Why, how is this?” inquired the priest, seeing that the man who had appeared at the door was entirely alone: “I thought you had a party here.”

“Sorra one but myself, plase your reverence,” said Jemmy Boyce, for he it was; “I went out, you see, sir, to watch for you, bekase poor Ally’s so eager to see you, an’ I hadn’t gone very far when what should I see but yourself comin’ walkin’ along, betune two of Maude’s men, an’ another of them right at your back. Och, wasn’t I terrified at the sight, for I knew there was a party of sojers a’most within call, an’ I hadn’t time to go look for help. As God would have it, I thought of this ould build-in’, when I seen the way they were takin’ you, so I crep along betune hedges and ditches till I got in here. Then thinks I to myself ‘if I could only make them b’lieve that there’s a lot o’ the boys in

the place, they'd be sure to run for their lives,' so, bedad, your reverence, I peeled off every stitch to the very shirt, and that itself, an' I put it on over the rest o' my clothes, and then I roused the shout as you hard yourself, an' I made such a racket that they must a' thought there was a houseful o' men in it; sure enough the Orange rascals did run for it—thanks be to God that I got your reverence safe out o' their clutches."

"An' many thanks to you, too, my trusty friend!" said the priest with deep emotion, as he shook the sinewy hand of the honest farmer. "May the Lord requite you here and hereafter for the service you have rendered me this night. Now let us hasten to your poor wife, and God grant we may be in time!"

Boyce quickly took off the shirt which had proved so useful, thrust it into his pocket and then hurried home with the priest. To their great joy they found Ally still alive, and Father Sheehy had the happiness of administering to her the last solemn rites of religion. Two hours after she breathed her last, and the priest was carefully concealed. In all the grief of the afflicted family, his safety was not forgotten.

What was the rage and mortification of the outwitted captors, when, coming back to the ruin a few minutes after, with the whole detachment of soldiers, they found only the bare walls—not a vestige

of priest or whiteboy was to be seen—the ghostly ruin was silent all and tenantless, and the discomfited guides, in addition to the loss of the reward, were forced to bear the scoffs and jibes of the soldiers.



CHAPTER II.

THE CHURCHYARD OF SHANDRAGHAN.

THERE was in those days a lone house standing close by the old churchyard of Shandraghan—and it may be there still for aught I know to the contrary—with its windows looking out into “the lone place of tombs.” In Father Sheehy’s time it was occupied by a farmer named Griffith, who was a kind-hearted, upright man, though a Protestant. The priest had at one time rendered him a signal service, and Griffith was not the man to forget it. He had been known to say that Father Sheehy was a wronged and persecuted man, at the same time expressing a wish that he could do anything to assist him. His good dispositions were speedily put to the test, for, one evening, about an hour before sundown, as he sat alone by the fire smoking his pipe, who should come in but the priest himself, disguised as a mendicant, with a huge wallet slung over his shoulder.

“Good evening, Billy,” said the pretended beggar, as he doffed his tattered *cawbeen*, and flung his bag on the earthen floor. “How is all with you!”

“Why, then, indeed, good man! you have the odds of me,” said Griffith, regarding the stranger with a quiet smile, “but we’re all well, thanks to you for

askin'. Sit down an' take an air o' the fire this could evenin'. Did you travel far the day?"

"I see you don't know me, Billy!" said the priest, sitting down by the fire, and spreading his hands to catch the genial warmth. "Did you ever see this face before?" and he turned so that the light fell full on his care-worn features.

Griffith started and drew back involuntarily. "Why, as I'm a livin' man, it's Father Sheehy himself."

"Sure enough it is!" replied the priest with a mournful smile, "you see I've got the bag* at last."

"But what in the world brings you here?" asked Griffith in great agitation; "don't you know they're not far off that's seekin' you night and day. I seen the sojers passin' not twenty minnits agone, an' they may be back this way before long."

"I know all that, Griffith, an' it's the very reason why you see me here. I have so often baffled my pursuers, that they're getting to be too sharp for me; they don't leave a Catholic house unvisited, and they destroy all before them; so I must put an end to this state of things, for I cannot bear to see others suffer on my account. I will give myself up—but not to these vultures who are thirsting for my blood. If I can only conceal myself a few days, till I can write to Dublin and get back an answer, I will then disburden my friends of a heavy charge. You are a Protestant—they will not suspect you of harboring

* That is to say, turned beggar.

me—Griffith! will you afford me a shelter? I know you are incapable of being tempted by the reward offered for my apprehension, and you see I have full confidence in your kindly feelings towards me.”

“An’ so you may, sir, so you may,” said Griffith rising from his seat and extending his hand to the priest, while the glow of honest satisfaction suffused his sun-browned cheek. “You’ll find, Father Sheehy, that you didn’t lean on a rotten stick—and that William Griffith never forgets a good turn, if it was the Pope himself that did it. But where in the world can I hide you? I’d just as soon the children didn’t get sight of you, if it could be helped.”

The fact was that the house did not afford a single hiding-place, and the out-houses were not to be relied on, unless the whole family were in the secret. They were then standing at a window, overlooking the churchyard, and the priest suddenly said:

“Is there not an old vault yonder in the graveyard, belonging to some family now extinct. I have heard people say so. Could I not hide there in the daytime—as I have only two or three days to provide for—and you might probably be able to admit me into the house at night, without your sons knowing anything of it.”

“The plan’s a good one, sir!” said Griffith in a melancholy tone, “but it would be an unnatural place to hide in. It’s a fearful thing for the livin’ to be shut up among the dead,—an’ I don’t like it, at all, sir, if it could be helped.”

"Ay, that's the question—if it could be helped. But I see no other prospect for concealment, and as I have never willingly or knowingly injured living man, I have no reason to shrink from abiding a day or two in the dwelling of the dead. Better there than in the hands of Maude or Bagwell's emissaries."

"Well! well! sir, I suppose we can't do better; and, then, I can let you in here every night till you get something to eat an' drink, an' a few hours' comfortable rest. But the boys will soon be in—sit down, sir, if you please, till I get you a bit to eat."

Having made a hasty meal of oaten cake, eggs and milk, Father Sheehy rose. "It is now almost dark," said he, "and I must retire to my hiding-place for a few hours, till your family are gone to bed. Just show me the door of the vault," he added with a forced smile, "and leave me to introduce myself to its inmates. Come, come, Billy, why do you stare so, and shake your head? Don't you know very well that the mouldering dead are safer company for a doomed man like me than many of the living? ha! ha!"

His laugh was wild and unnatural, and it made Griffith shudder. He spoke not another word, but beckoned the priest to follow, and led him out by the back-door, and round the end of the house into the graveyard. "There's the door, sir!" he said, pointing to a low, narrow door, which, being a little

lower than the surface of the ground, was reached by a few steps, green and mossy from long disuse. The door was old and crazy, and merely rested against the aperture. The priest descended the steps with a single bound, and lifting the worm-eaten door aside looked into the vault. But he could not see even its extent, for within it was dark as midnight. Even the brave bold heart in Father Sheehy's breast shrank from entering there at that hour. "Go," said he to Griffith, who still lingered, "I can easily secrete myself now in the dim light from any one passing the road by keeping close to the wall. I need not intrude on the peaceful slumbers of the dead till the morning light compels me, owl-like, to seek the darkness. But go into the house, my worthy friend, for I hear some one coming down the road."

In this strange retreat the persecuted priest remained some four or five days, sitting all the day on a large stone which he found in the old vault, reading his breviary, as well as he could, by the dim light which came through the wide chinks of the door, meditating the while on the lives of the first Christians in the Catacombs, and combating his natural aversion to the place by the remembrance of the great St. Anthony, voluntarily retiring to the tombs, in order to baffle his spiritual enemies

"And I, too," he communed with himself, "I, too, may profit by a brief sojourn in this dreary place. It will prepare me for the approaching time when I

shall be called upon to enter the world of spirits. Let me, then, endeavor to profit by the occasion, and meditate on the eternal truths while only the dead are near—the silent, long-forgotten dead. Placed, as it were, between the two worlds—a link between death and life—let me consider how I stand before God—how I am prepared to account for my stewardship at the bar of Divine Justice.”

Engaged in such meditations as these he heeded not the flight of time, nor sighed for a return to the busy, bustling world. But the affairs of men—even his own—were moving on. He had written a letter to Mr. Secretary Waite, offering to give himself up provided his trial might take place in the Court of King’s Bench, in Dublin, and not in Clonmel, where the power of his enemies was supreme and despotic. An answer, accepting his proposal, came, addressed to his brother-in-law, who brought it himself to Griffith. That evening Father Sheehy ventured to go home with Burke, took an affectionate leave of his weeping sister, and set out, accompanied by his brother-in-law, for the house of Mr. O’Callaghan, a magistrate of high standing and unblemished reputation. To him Father Sheehy surrendered himself, on condition that he was to be sent to Dublin; and Mr. O’Callaghan showed himself well worthy of the trust reposed in him, for he treated him with all the respect due to his priestly character and his long sufferings. He sent to Clogheen for a troop of horse to escort him in safety, fearing to trust the

Orange constables by whom every magistrate was then surrounded.

When all was in readiness for Father Sheehy's departure, his brother-in-law came up to him, and said in a low voice, as he wrung his hand at parting:

"Your cousin, Martin O'Brien, is going up to town to-day. He will remain as near you as he possibly can, so as to render you any little service that may be in his power." Then raising his voice he added: "May the Lord bless you, Father Nicholas, and deliver you from the hands of your enemies!"

"Amen!" responded the priest. "Tell Catherine to be sure and pray for me—and you, too, Thomas! you, too, for it is written that 'the prayer of the righteous availeth much.' God be with you till I see you again, and if we do not meet here, we shall meet in heaven—at least I hope so."

Father Sheehy was then placed on a horse between two of the dragoons, and having exchanged a kind farewell with Mr. O'Callaghan, he turned his horse, as did the soldiers, and the troop rode off. The priest pulled his hat over his brow, and was speedily lost to surrounding objects, his thoughts being intent on the probable issue of his approaching trial. But his trust was in God, and however it might end, he resolved to regard the decision as coming from the Great Judge of all, the Disposer of events, and, therefore, to be received with entire submission. It was early in the morning when the prisoner and his guard left Mr. O'Callaghan's house, and at eight

o'clock in the evening they stopped before the arched gateway of the Lower Castle Yard. The officer's summons was answered by a sentry from within, and very soon the heavy gates were thrown open, the troop rode into the yard, and Father Sheehy was duly delivered to the proper authorities, "to be kept till called for." As the doors of the prison closed, he thanked God that he was not in Clonmel jail, but at the same time he made an offering of himself to God, saying :

"O Lord! do with me what thou wilt! Thou knowest what is best for me!"

Leaving Father Sheehy immured in that prison where he was not destined to remain long, let us go back some months to bring forward an occurrence too little known, yet honorable* alike to a public functionary of those days, and the people by whom his upright conduct was so well appreciated.*

At an early period of these agrarian disturbances in the South, the government of the day had appointed a special commission to examine into the real state of the case, and to try the offenders (whether real or supposed) who had been taken into custody. Many of the most respectable Catholics had been tried, Father Sheehy amongst the number, and if the whole country was not plunged in mourning by the loss of many useful lives, it was not the

* Plowden relates this fact in his History of Ireland, and Dr. Madden mentions it on his authority in his Historical Introduction to the Lives and Times of the United Irishmen.

fault of the zealous Orange magistrates, or their formidable phalanx of witnesses, for certainly they all did their duty and did it well—so well, in fact, that they overshot the mark, and made the conspiracy into which they had entered so broadly manifest that the whole proceedings fell to the ground. This was owing in great measure to the strict sense of justice and keen legal acumen of Sir Richard Acton, Lord Chief Justice of the Common Pleas, who had been sent down to preside on the occasion. The uprightness and impartiality of that excellent judge were indeed remarkable and worthy of all praise, at a time when partizanship ran so high that it was deemed a crime to show any sympathy for the sufferings of the people, and when every trial of a political character was expected to end in the conviction of the accused. But Sir Richard Acton was far above the gross prejudices of the time—when seated on the bench he diverted himself of all party antipathies or predilections, and really appears to have given his decision on the actual merits of the case before him.*

Many of the accused were, therefore, honorably acquitted, and they being, as may be supposed, the most respectable in character, and prominent in position of the Catholic community, the rejoicing was great all over the country. The people were, in fact, transported with joy, for hitherto, in all such

* Dr. Madden aptly styles Sir Richard Acton "the Fletcher of his day."

cases, prosecution was sure to end in conviction, and conviction in banishment or death.

It was morning, a mild, fair morning, and the sun had already ascended half-way towards his meridian height, when a carriage-and-four, containing Sir Richard Acton and a barrister who had accompanied him from town, drove out of Clonmel, and moved rapidly away on the Dublin road. About two miles from Clonmel the coachman suddenly pulled up and informed Sir Richard that there was a great crowd of people on the road before them.

"I don't know what they're about, my lord," said the man, "but they're a wild-looking set, and I don't half like their appearance. I'm afraid they're some of the Whiteboys, your lordship."

"Well, suppose they be," replied the Chief Justice, "you need not look so terrified. From what I have seen of them, they are far from being the bloodthirsty savages they are represented. Drive on, Robin!"

The man obeyed for the moment, but had only gone a short way when he stopped again.

"Please your lordship, I'm afraid of my life to go on. Your lordship knows very well how they hate the law and all belonging to it, and it's short work they'll make of us all if they know who's in the carriage. As sure as your lordship's sitting there, they'll tear us limb from limb, and they'll fall on me first that's outside!"

Sir Richard and his companion laughed heartily

at the doleful countenance of the coachman, yet though neither showed any symptoms of fear, the barrister deemed it prudent to see what the gathering meant.

"With your permission, Sir Richard, I will walk on before the carriage and see what they are about. If they have any evil intention in awaiting us here, it must be you who stand in the greatest danger, and it may be well for you to keep out of sight. It is true these Tipperary Whiteboys *have* no great love for the law or its administrators, and I like not this assemblage, evidently awaiting *us*."

"Nay," said the Chief Justice calmly, "if their intention be hostile we cannot now escape them, and I will not consent that you should expose yourself even to possible danger on my account. Somehow, I cannot persuade myself that there *is* danger—but we shall soon know how the matter stands. Drive on, Robin! drive on, I say! no one will harm you!"

"Oh Lord, Sir Richard, here they are!—they're coming towards us, as I'm a sinner. They'll kill us all, my lord! they will, they will!—oh! then, wasn't I the unlucky man to undertake to drive a judge's carriage through this blood-thirsty Tipperary!"

He had scarcely spoken when the horses were stopped by the brawny arms of the tall mountaineers, and many loud voices were heard on either side of the carriage. "Isn't it Judge Acton that's within?" Robin was scarcely able to keep his seat

on hearing this supposed confirmation of his worst fears. He sat pale and trembling on the box, the whip and the reins fell from his nerveless grasp, and he could only murmur some inarticulate words in reply.

"Yes," said the Chief Justice, putting his head out of the window, "I am Sir Richard Acton,—what is your business with me?"

"Business! oh, then, sorra business in the world wide, your lordship's honor, only to thank you from our hearts out for what you did in the town athin. We daren't say what we wanted to say there, please your lordship, bekase the sojers 'ud be set on to keep us quiet, and the magistrates, bad cess to them! 'ud be making it out *trayson*, if we raised our voices at all, at all. But we can't let you lave Tipperary without thankin' you, and lettin' you know that we'll never forget your goodness to us all!"

Sir Richard turned to his companion with a benevolent and, moreover, a gratified smile on his face.

"I told you so—I told you they were not likely to do us any harm. But I did *not* tell you of this overflowing gratitude, for I could not possibly have anticipated any such thing."

Turning again to the peasants who stood hat in hand round the carriage-windows: "My very good friends, you take me somewhat by surprise. I have done nothing that entitles me to such an expression of gratitude. As a judge I have simply done my duty, favoring neither one side nor the other."

"An' that's jist what we want to thank you for. We want no favor, but only a fair thrial. Justice, my lord, justice is all we ask, and that's what your lordship gave us. May the great God in heaven have mercy on *you* when you stand before Him to be judged! And we'll pray for you every day we have to live, an' we'll tache our little ones to pray for you, too, bekase you gave law an' justice to the people."

"Ay!" cried one taller than the rest, being, indeed, our acquaintance, Darby Mullin, "if judges an' magisthrates was all like his lordship there needn't be any Whiteboys in Tipperary, or anywhere else for that matther!"

Here some women, crushing their way through the excited multitude, held up their little children, crying: "There he is now! look at him, alanna! for maybe you'd never see the likes again barrin' you see himself—that's the judge that gave us fair play, astore!"

"May the blessin' o' God be about him an' his, now an' for evermore!"

"Fall back there all o' you!" roared a stentorian voice, and a space being cleared, the horses were in a twinkling taken from the carriage, and notwithstanding Sir Richard's earnest remonstrance, the brawny fellows laid hold of the shafts, and drew the vehicle along with amazing swiftness, while the hills around re-echoed with the shouts of the warm-hearted, grateful peasantry:

"Hurrah for the English judge that wasn't afeard or ashamed to do us justice!" "Acton forever!"

"Three cheers more, boys! jist to show his lordship an' the other jintleman what a Tipperary cheer is!" The three cheers which followed might well have made the Bagwells, and the Maudes, and the Hewitsons turn pale and tremble, while it brought the tears to the eyes of the upright judge.

When at length the carriage stopped, and the horses were once more put to, Sir Richard presented a bank-bill of considerable amount to the first who appeared at the window. But the man drew back almost indignantly.

"Take it, friend!" said the judge in a kindly tone, "just to have you all drink my health this raw chilly morning!"

"No, no, your lordship, not a rap we'll take! As for drinkin' your health, we'll do it, plase God! at our own expense. Now you may dhrive on!" he said to Robin who had long ago recovered his self-possession. "You were daunted at first, my lad! we could see that, but you know nothing at all about us, or you wouldn't. You're not a Tip—that's plain!"

"Farewell, then!" said Sir Richard, taking off his hat and bowing courteously to the crowd, as the carriage rolled away. "You have taught me to love and reverence your virtues, and to make allowance for your faults!"

Another enthusiastic cheer rent the air—the

crowd fell back on either side, and the carriage rolled through, the people gazing after it as long as it remained in sight, pouring out fervent blessings on its owner.

"I tell you," said the Chief Justice, as, sinking back on his seat he drew a long breath, "I tell you, my good sir, there is a fearful moral to be drawn from this scene, illustrative as it is of Irish character. Would that every judge in the land could have witnessed it!"

"Truly these poor people are vilely traduced," said the barrister, "and their rulers see them only through a most distorted medium!"

"Well, Robin!" said Sir Richard to his coachman when they stopped to have the horses fed, "what do you think of the Tips? Not quite so blood-thirsty, after all, eh!"

"Faith, your lordship, they're not half as bad as the bad name they've got. I'll be hanged if ever I stand by and hear them ill-spoken of again, poor fellows! Why, to hear the gentlemen's servants in Clonmel, you'd think the Whiteboys were born divils!—might I make free to ask your lordship was there any Whiteboys among them people on the road?"

This question was put with an earnestness which brought a smile to the calm, grave face of the Chief Justice, and made his companion laugh heartily.

"Why, Robin," said the lawyer, "that is rather a puzzling question even for a judge!—how on earth

do you suppose your master could distinguish a Whiteboy from all others?"

"Well, really, Robin, my good fellow!" said Sir Richard with his usual gentleness, "I can scarcely answer your question, but I am inclined to think that by far the greater number of those men were Whiteboys."

"And yet they drew *our* carriage," said he of the whip, musingly, "though we were sent down to try them. Well, I protest I don't know what to make of them for Whiteboys!"

"Just this, Robin!" said the barrister with a good-humored laugh, "just this, that the devil himself is not so black as he's represented. But be off now and see to the horses—there's a good fellow, for we have a long road between us and dinner!"

"I say, Sir Richard," asked the lawyer when they were again seated in the carriage after "stretching their limbs" by a short walk while the horses enjoyed their feed, "what is your opinion of the priest Sheehy? What manner of man do you take him to be?"

"Just the sort of man who cannot be tolerated by the petty tyrants who are determined to keep the people under their heel. He is a man of ardent temperament,—bold and reckless as regards his own safety, but keenly alive to the wants and sufferings of the people and their manifold wrongs. I take him to be a high-souled, warm-hearted man, but imprudent withal, inasmuch as he takes no pains to con-

ciliate those who have it in their power to do him and his much mischief. The consequence is that the magistrates both fear and hate him."

A new subject was started of perhaps more immediate interest, and the Tipperary trials were dropped for the time.

* * * * *

Shortly before Father Sheehy had given himself up, a fresh commotion was raised in the neighborhood of Clogheen, by the sudden and mysterious disappearance of Bridge, the crown-witness. This man—it will be remembered from Moll Dunlea's conversation with the rector—had himself been arrested for Whiteboyism, and being known to all the country round as a simple, half-witted creature, the magistrates had judged him a fit subject for a crown-witness. He was harmless as a child, and wholly incapable of either conceiving or executing a malicious project of any kind. He repeatedly denied all knowledge of the affairs of the Whiteboys, but his denial went for nothing, as the magistrates had determined that he *should* give information. They scrupled not to torture the poor creature under pretence of making him tell the truth, till they finally succeeded in forcing him to swear against certain individuals whose names they suggested to him. Father Sheehy was one of the first mentioned in these dictated depositions, so that Bridge's testimony went to corroborate that of the amiable and estimable Moll Dunlea.

All of a sudden, however, Bridge disappeared, and his fate became an inscrutable mystery to the whole community. Man, woman and child talked of the event, but none could offer any feasible solution of the enigma. The simple peasantry were inclined to rejoice that Bridge was not forthcoming, "for," said they to each other, "it happens well for poor Father Sheehy. God keep him out o' the way, till the thrials are over, anyhow, for the crature hasn't the sense but to swear whatever they bid him, an' we all know how it 'ud go."

"Ay, but what in the world has come of him, Paddy?" asked our old acquaintance Darby Mullen. "God knows I'd be sorry for anything bad to happen him, for he was ever an' always a quite, harmless crature. Do you think would he have the craft to hide himself a-purpose for fear o' swearing what he knew wasn't the truth? Myself thinks he hadn't so much cuteness in him."

"God knows, Darby, God knows," replied Paddy Carroll. "But anyhow it's as well he's not to the fore—even on *your account and mine*," he added significantly.

Darby nodded assent, and reached his pipe to Paddy, inviting him to "take a dhraw" in a tone which indicated a desire to change the subject.

Once escaped from the clutches of his enemies, Father Sheehy's natural goodness of heart and his frank affability of manner failed not to produce their effect on those about him. He was at first lodged

in the provost in the Lower Castle Yard, but after a cursory examination his innocence was so apparent to Mr. Secretary Waite (already prepossessed in his favor by his letter of capitulation, so to speak) and to Town-Major Sirr,* that he was at once freed from all restraint, and permitted to go anywhere within the city limits. Major Sirr went so far as to become security for his appearance at the approaching trial.

"I will never believe," said the good-natured Town-Major, "that such a man as he is guilty of the crimes laid to his charge. I have had some experience of those over-zealous worthies in the South who trump up plots thick and fast to keep their hands full of business, and I swear to you (of course it goes no farther) that in nine cases out of ten it is they who deserve trial and not the poor miserable devils of countrymen whom they goad to madness with their oppressions and exactions. But that is not our affair—it is for the judges to look after that. This priest, however, must not be kept in prison, for I see his innocence as plain as I see your face. So I'll be his security for appearing when called on—let him out on my responsibility."

"Agreed!" was Waite's answer, and Father Sheehy was speedily informed that until such time as his trial came on, he was at liberty to go where he

* This Major Sirr was father to him who exercised such wanton cruelty on the noble but unfortunate Lord Edward Fitzgerald. A striking verification, surely, of the old proverb that many a good father has a bad son.

pleased, provided he did not quit the precincts of Dublin city. His word of honor was then taken that he would appear when called, and with many expressions of heartfelt gratitude to the high-minded gentlemen who had dealt so generously by him, he withdrew, almost a free man.

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Nearly eleven months had passed away before Father Sheehy was brought up for trial, the case being put back from time to time under one pretence or another. During all that long period, Father Sheehy had been supplied with funds by his friends in the country, whom he had the comfort, moreover, of seeing from time to time, and especially his favorite cousin, Martin O'Brien, who, in fact, remained almost constantly with him.

But at length the time came when his fate was to be decided, and the summons was given him in the little chapel of SS. Michael and John, where he had just said Mass. A silent bow was his only answer as he turned and walked into the sanctuary where he knelt in prayer a few moments before the Blessed Sacrament, and then arose and approached O'Brien who awaited him in the aisle.

"Do you see that, my boy?" he asked with assumed gaiety, when they had reached the street, "there's a notice from the Court that my trial will come on on the 10th—just four days from now. So it is, you see: 'long looked for comes at last,' as the old saying goes."

"My God ! how unfortunate !" cried O'Brien much agitated. "But you must not appear, Father Nicholas ! indeed you must not !"

"How !" said the priest turning sternly on his cousin, "how ! is it you, Martin ! that would counsel such a deed of shame ? Would you have me betray the confidence of the generous man who voluntarily answered for my appearance ? For shame, Martin O'Brien ! Certainly I *will* appear, in God's holy name, and leaving to him the issue."

"But I have just got news from home that will increase your danger, and that very considerably."

"What is that ?"

"A report has recently been set afloat about Clogheen that Bridge was made away with, in fact murdered !"

"Good God !" exclaimed the priest, and a momentary paleness overspread his face. "Good God ! can that be true ? Poor simple fellow ! could any one be found wicked enough to lay violent hands on a creature so guileless and so simple ?"

"I know not, my dear sir," replied O'Brien, "but much I fear that the report will come hard on you."

"On me !" cried the priest in unfeigned surprise, "why, what on earth has it to do with *me* ?"

"Much—too, too much !—see you not, Father Nicholas, that whatever may have become of Bridge your enemies have got up this report, so that in

case you are now acquitted of this ridiculous charge of treason, they can still retain you as being accessory to the murder, whether real or supposed?"

"No, no, O'Brien, no, no!" replied the priest slowly and decisively, "you cannot persuade me that even they, bad as they are, could be guilty of such atrocious wickedness. Your friendly anxiety for me makes you too apprehensive of evil." And then he changed the conversation by inquiring after his sister's health.

But O'Brien renewed his request, and during the time which intervened before the trial, he urged his reverend friend again and again to make his escape while it was yet in his power, representing to him, and with some show of justice, that self-preservation is a sacred law of nature, and that it was his duty to adopt the only means that remained to him of eluding the vengeful pursuit of his remorseless enemies.

"You are not bound," said he, "before God or man, to throw yourself on destruction, which you will assuredly do if you stand your trial, for my heart tells me that this strange and sudden report of Bridge's murder is a hellish device to ensure your conviction. Innocence will not save you should their wretched informers swear against you as being cognizant of the murder. As to the amount of Major Sirr's security we can easily make it up amongst us and repay him with thanks, which we will do were it to beggar the whole connection. Go, then,

in the name of God, and thus defeat the malice of those who are thirsting for your blood!"

"I cannot do it, O'Brien! I dare not do it! The voice of conscience and the dictates of honor alike command me to remain and confront my accusers: the former tells me I am innocent—innocent of any crime either against society or the laws of this realm—while the latter reminds me that my word is pledged and cannot be forfeited, end the matter how it may. Go, Martin! urge me no more, if you value my peace of mind, for I cannot and *will* not do what you ask. I will not shrink from a trial as though I were indeed guilty, and you know, moreover, as well as I do, that here, at least, I shall have a fair chance."

"Ay, but that devilish rumor—that's what I fear, and not the present indictment. If they bring such a charge as that against you, and prove it home, as they will—then God have mercy on your soul, for I know they're fit for anything, and will carry their point by fair means or foul."

"Nonsense, man, nonsense!" said the priest with a faint smile, "your fears magnify the danger, and, what is more, my dear fellow, you are a little uncharitable, I fear, in regard to these functionaries. For my part, I believe the report was only got up to intimidate me, but if so, they have missed their mark. I fear them not, for 'the Lord is my deliverer,' and 'whom shall I fear?' He is the great

Disposer of events—be it done unto me according to His will!” And he reverently raised his hat and looked upwards through the shifting clouds to the blue sky.

O'Brien sighed deeply, but made no answer.



CHAPTER III

LAW AND JUSTICE.

THE 10th of February came on clear and cold, and, before many of its hours had passed away, the Rev. Nicholas Sheehy was tried for treason and treasonable practices. The charge was a serious one, no doubt, and even the stoutest heart might well have quailed under the circumstances, but Father Sheehy looked with a smiling eye on the imposing array of white-wigged lawyers—the earnest-looking occupants of the jury-box, as they crowded forward to see the prisoner; nay, even the grave and awful dignity of the three judges failed to blanch his cheek or dim his eye. That cheek had much of the freshness of youth, and that clear blue eye was full of life and spirit, while his fine aquiline nose gave token of the decision which marked his character. The trial went on, evidence on both sides was sifted to the bottom, and it is but fair to say (what respectable historians have already said) that the whole proceedings were marked by the strictest impartiality. Several hours were occupied in the examination of the witnesses, and very often as some glaring inconsistency was discovered in the evidence for the prosecution, or some shameless bribery was brought to light, Major

Sirr, who sat near the judges, would address a whispered remark to the gentleman who sat next to him. Throughout the whole trial the judges treated the Tipperary dignitaries with something very like contempt, to the great discomfiture of those ultra-loyal persons, and when at seven o'clock in the evening, Chief Justice Gore rose to address the jury, he said it gave him no ordinary pleasure to assure them that the Court was unanimous in believing Mr. Sheehy innocent of the charge brought against him. The jury retired and very soon returned to their box with a verdict of NOT GUILTY. No sooner was the word pronounced, than one wild, enthusiastic cheer rang out from hall and gallery, and was caught up by the multitude without. Father Sheehy manifested not the smallest change of countenance, but stood leaning against the railing of the dock with folded arms and head slightly raised, in the attitude of listening. But the drama was not yet concluded—the Chief Justice arose to address the prisoner. At that moment Father Sheehy looked towards one of his chief opponents who had come all the way from the neighborhood of Clogheen to be present at the trial, and he saw on his face an exulting smile which boded him no good. His eye wandered on to the Chief Justice, and he was convinced that there was something more to come, for the face of the judge had undergone a serious change. After a momentary pause he said: "The jury, as I expected, has acquitted you of the

charges contained in the indictment, and by this time you should have been free, had not a fresh obstacle presented itself—one, too, involving the most serious consequences.” He paused a moment, and then exchanged a few words in a low voice with the other two judges—a death-like silence pervaded the court—the silence of intense anxiety and expectation. All eyes were turned on the priest; his head had fallen on his chest and he seemed lost in thought, but no shadow of fear was seen on his face. The judge spoke again, and Father Sheehy raised his head to listen: “Nicholas Sheehy! it is now my painful duty to remand you to prison—you are charged with being accessory to the wilful and deliberate murder of John Bridge!”

A cry of horror escaped from almost every individual present, and again were all eyes turned on the unfortunate prisoner now evidently doomed—doomed to undergo every species of persecution, and deprived of all chance of escape. He was pale, but his eye was still undimmed, though a tear was evidently forcing its way. After a moment’s silence he bowed low to the Chief Justice, then to each of the other two, and lastly to the jury.

“My Lord Chief Justice!” he said at length, “this new accusation—terrible as it is—does not at all surprise me. Knowing the men from whom it comes, and their persevering enmity towards me, I had every reason to expect that they would be prepared to follow up my acquittal here—if acquitted I should be—

with some other charge. Such a charge as this no one who knows me could have anticipated, but God's will be done! I accept this grievous humiliation as coming from His paternal hand, and will only pray Him to turn the hearts of those who persecute me. I am thankful to this worshipful court, my lord, and to the gentlemen of the jury for the impartiality with which my trial has been conducted, and will ever pray that the righteous Judge of all may deal mercifully by those who have not shrunk from doing justice to an oppressed and persecuted man. I am now ready to submit to whatever fate awaits me, always declaring that if John Bridge were indeed murdered, which God forbid! I have had neither act or part in, nor knowledge of, that execrable deed. I am well aware that this declaration avails nothing before a Court of Justice, but I owe it to my reputation as a man, and still more as a priest of the Most High God, and that God, who seeth the heart, knoweth that I do not prevaricate. I have done, my lords!"

"Mr. Sheehy!" replied the humane Chief Justice, "it is not for me to express an opinion of any sort in this matter, but this I will say that I have seldom performed a more painful duty than that of remanding you to prison. Mr. Sheriff," he added, addressing that functionary, "you will take the prisoner at the bar again into custody, until such time as he be brought up for trial."

The officer bowed—so did the prisoner, but a shout of execration rose from the multitude within

and without the building. "A plot! a plot!" was the general cry, and a violent commotion was seen to agitate the crowd. Father Sheehy turned before he left the dock, and made a warning gesture with his hand. Speech was not allowed him, but the people understood his wishes, and showed their respect for him by the profound silence which followed, a silence which was only broken by a murmur of pity and indignation. If any were present who believed him guilty of this new crime, they took good care to conceal their opinion for not one dissentient voice was heard. No sooner had the prisoner quitted the dock and the judges withdrawn from the bench, than the fierce shout was heard: "A groan for Maude, Hewitson and Bagwell!—the priest-hunting, blood-thirsty magistrates of Clogheen!—there goes one of them, boys—let him hear how well the Dublin lads can hoot such rascals!" The groan, or rather a series of groans and hisses which followed, made Bagwell right glad to escape to his carriage which was in waiting, while his black heart overflowed with venom to hear the wild, and oft-renewed cheer which ascended from many thousand voices at the mention of Father Sheehy's name. And again and again the cry arose of "Sheehy for ever—down with the Tipperary magistrates!" until Bagwell thought it would never cease, or that he could never get fast enough out of hearing. "But we'll have our revenge for this," was his consoling reflection, "by the soul of King William! but *we'll*

have our day, and a black day it will be for him, the popish villain; that's as sure as my name is John Bagwell. His Dublin mob shan't save him—no, by H——, nor this white-livered Gore, if he was again sitting in judgment—but he shan't, for we'll lose a fall for it, or we'll have him brought to Clonmel. This trying the fellow in Dublin will never do, and I knew that all along."

Unfortunately for Father Sheehy, his enemies did succeed in having him brought to Clonmel for trial, and he was only taken from Newgate, to be transferred to the jail of his native county, under the escort of a party of dragoons. It was night when he again entered Clonmel, and it was by torchlight that he passed those gloomy gates, which were to him the portals of fate. They closed behind him, and as the echo died away along the dreary walls, a cold shiver shot through all his body, and for the first time in his life his heart sank within him, for he felt as though the icy hand of death were already grasping him, and that the warm living world was shut out forever. But his depression was only momentary. "Why should I despair!" he said to himself—"they cannot deprive me of heaven, unless through my own fault, and the greater my sufferings and humiliation here the greater will be my reward hereafter, provided God gives me the grace to sanctify them by consecrating them to Him. Courage, my soul! heaven lies beyond the dark portals of death—let us not shrink from the passage,

since Christ himself has set us the example. He died, then why should we fear to die?"

His reflections were cut short by the jailer, who roughly bade him follow, and he was very soon the tenant of a cold, damp cell on the first floor of the prison. Again did his heart sink, but he quickly shook off his despondency, and betook himself to prayer.

No sooner was his arrival in Clonmel made known than the whole country was thrown into a feverish excitement. Some were rejoiced—that is to say, the few who lived on the hope of seeing the Catholic party entirely prostrated and the Protestant ascendancy permanently established—but by the great mass of the people the event was hailed with all the wildness of lamentation. It is very questionable if any one individual there was who really believed Father Sheehy cognizant of Bridge's murder, if murdered he indeed was, but it is quite certain that many affected to believe it.

But the priest was not alone in this new misfortune, for it was the policy of the ruling party to get rid of the most influential Catholics, either by fair or foul means, and the disappearance of Bridge, the crown witness, was a glorious opportunity for involving many of them in one common ruin. At first he had only for companion one Edward Meighan, who was accused of having given the fatal blow, acting on the orders of the priest. The witnesses on this occasion were the estimable Moll Dunlea,

John Toohy, who had been recently liberated from Kilkenny jail (where he was confined for horse stealing) for the express purpose of giving informations against Father Sheehy and Edward Meighan, and the third was the vagrant, John Lonergan, a boy of some sixteen years of age, whose character was of the very worst description.

Father Sheehy was nearly a month in Clonmel jail before his trial came on, and during that time he bore his sufferings with amazing fortitude and even cheerfulness. He was not allowed to receive any visits, but it chanced that a gentleman of his acquaintance entered the inner yard of the jail while the prisoners were taking their daily walk, and saw the unfortunate priest sitting on a lone bench against the wall, being unable to walk. Being there on business with one of the turnkeys the gentleman ventured to approach and ask him how he did.

"Tolerably well in health, I thank you," was the reply, "but you see I am a cripple."

"How is that, sir?"

"Why, look at my legs," he said with a smile, pointing to the bandages by which they were enveloped, "they are swollen to the most unnatural size, and fearfully lacerated by the cords wherewith they were tied under the horse's belly, as I came here from Dublin."

"God bless my soul, Father Sheehy! is that the case?" asked the other, in unaffected astonishment, while the tears stood in his eyes.

"To be sure—to be sure it is," exclaimed the prisoner with a gay laugh, "but take care—don't let any one here see you sympathizing with a priest—it would be the ruin of you, my dear sir, indeed it would. God bless you and go away now, but a word in your ear before you go—we'll defeat these fellows yet, with God's help!"

"That you may, I pray God," was the fervent answer, as the gentleman turned away. The prisoner struck up a snatch of an old hymn tune, which was his custom when he wanted to 'bother grief,' as the Irish phrase has it. For years after, the clear, sweet tones of his fine voice, singing, or rather humming, seemed to ring in the ear of him who had just parted from him, and the remembrance was painful in the extreme, when connected with the tragical end of Father Sheehy.

The very few who were permitted to see the priest, saw him only in the presence of the jailer, and they were all most urgent in their entreaties that he would call on a number of respectable witnesses, which he could easily do, to prove that he was in no way cognizant of Bridge's murder. So great was the power of his enemies in Clonmel and the adjacent towns that no lawyer could be found to undertake his defence, fearing to incur the wrath of his persecutors. A Dublin attorney had, however, been engaged to conduct the defence, and he urged the necessity of summoning all the witnesses

whose evidence could be relied on, but to all these representations Father Sheehy laughingly replied :

“Why, what need is there of troubling so many—will not two or three respectable witnesses be quite sufficient? There I have Mr. Keating of Turbrid to prove that I slept at his house on the night that Bridge is said to have been murdered; and what can be clearer than that? Will any jury—even an Orange packed jury—dare to take the oath of a strumpet, and a noted thief, in preference to that of a gentleman of high standing and unblemished character? And I have Mr. Herbert, too. Both of these are independent; and where is the use of exposing these poor, warm-hearted people who are so willing to brave danger on my account, when these two are quite enough? You tell me that scores of my parishioners are able and willing to prove me innocent——”

“And not only that,” interrupted his cousin, O’Brien, “but there are two or three able to prove that no such murder was ever committed, Bridge having taken leave of them, for the purpose of going abroad somewhere.”

“Well!” said Father Sheehy, “that may be, but it will be enough for me to establish the fact that I knew nothing of the murder, and the fewer witnesses I have it will be all the better, for I cannot consent to let so many persons draw down on themselves the vengeance of these oppressors, whose power equals their malice. No, no, O’Brien!—no, no!”

"There now," returned O'Brien bitterly—"that was just the way you served me when I wanted you to quit the country before your last trial came on—it would have been well for you if you had taken my advice."

"Not so, Martin, whatever comes of this I do not regret having then awaited my trial—it was my duty to do so, and we must never be deterred from doing our duty."

O'Brien was here abruptly informed that it was time for him to go, and there the conversation ended.

It really seemed as though a doom rested on Father Sheehy, for he could not be persuaded to avail himself of the means within his reach for the establishment of his innocence. It is true, his notions were of the noblest and purest nature—being unwilling, as we have seen, to expose any one without absolute necessity to the hatred and malice of his own persecutors; but still we cannot help wishing that he had listened to reason, and permitted the people to come forward and give their just testimony. Still it is very doubtful whether his witnesses would have been allowed to give their evidence, for it is now matter of history that during the whole time of his trial the court-house was surrounded by treble lines of armed soldiery, who suffered none to go in or out without a pass from the magistrate. From the day before his trial, too, the streets of Clonmel were constantly patrolled, both day and night, by parties of armed men, headed by

certain of the vile Orange magistrates themselves—lodging-houses and taverns were kept under the closest *surveillance*, so that the friends of the unfortunate priest were not even permitted to manifest the slightest sympathy—nay, they dared not venture to converse on the subject. In short, the whole town was in the hands of the magistrates and their unprincipled satellites, and pale dismay was on the face of every one who favored the Catholic party, or was interested in the fate of those who lay thus at the mercy of the common enemy. The crown-witnesses were handsomely entertained at the barracks in Clonmel. There Toohy cracked his jokes over his steaming whiskey-punch, furnished from a neighboring tavern, and the vagabond Lonergan grinned approval, while Moll Dunlea was in her element, romping and carousing amongst the soldiers. She had taken up with one in particular whose name was Brady, and he being a nominal Catholic either felt or affected to feel an interest in the fate of Father Sheehy. One evening when they were all assembled in the guard-room—it was the evening all but one before the trial—Brady suddenly asked Moll whether she did not feel a little squeamish about swearing against the priest.

“Squeamish,” cried Moll, snapping her fingers contemptuously, “the devil a *that* I care for all the priests from shore to Shannon. An’ if it goes to that amn’t I doin’ what’s right—isn’t it fittin’ that the guilty should suffer—gainsay that if you can.”

"Guilty," repeated Brady, incredulously—"you know as well as I do, Moll, my sweetheart, that the priest is not guilty."

"Who says so?" cried Moll, starting to her feet, and shaking her clenched fist at the soldier, while her face grew livid with anger—"who says that he's not guilty?—whoever has the impudence to say it, Moll Dunlea's the girl that'll soon give them the lie. I'll prove it against a thousand—that I will—ay, an' what's more, he'll hang for it, an' I'll have the pleasure of seein' him."

"Why, what harm did he ever do you, Moll?" inquired the soldier in a coaxing tone, being desirous of reaching the bottom of the secret, though his motive was only that of curiosity.

"Harm!" said Toohy, taking up the word before Moll could speak, "didn't he order her out o' the chapel—ay, faith did he, Jim!—he put the dacent girl out, an' cursed her into the bargain, because she wouldn't give up a boy she was livin' with at the time. Sorra a word o' lie I'm tellin', Jim. An now is it any wonder that she'd owe him a spite? an' between ourselves, he was hard on me, too, though the dear knows I'm as innocent a boy as you'd see in a summer's day—throth I am, an' Jack Lonergan will tell you so as well as myself."

Lonergan answered this appeal by a sort of grunt that might have been construed either into denial or assent, but Moll cut short the conversation by calling for "another glass."

"Where's the use talking," said she, "it makes a body divilish dry; give us another glass, Brady, that's the chat, let the priest, an' the judges an' all, go to the d——l, for all us. Hurra! that's the raal stuff—here's may we never have worse to drink!"

It was a melancholy sight to look at that miserable woman, and think that on the word of such as she should hang the lives of men of high standing and unblemished honor. What a state of society it was when such a man as Father Sheehy, his cousin Edmund Sheehy, Mr. Farrell and Mr. Buxton, were condemned and executed on the evidence of such profligate wretches!

For a day or two before the trial no one was allowed to see either Father Sheehy or his companions in misfortune, and though hundreds of friends crowded into the town, yet no one ventured to speak above his breath of that which engrossed the attention of all. On the morning of the trial Sir Thomas Maude and the two Bagwells were seated in the parlor of an inn adjoining the court-house engaged in conversation when Mr. Cornelius O'Callaghan made his appearance, and unceremoniously joined their company. This gentleman was well known to all three, but they had their own reasons for affecting reserve in his presence.

"Good morning, gentlemen," said the new-comer, "what news have you got here? I hope my entrance has not disturbed you."

"Not at all, Mr. O'Callaghan, not at all, sir,"

replied John Bagwell, making room for him beside himself. "We are just talking over some matters of little importance."

"What sort of a calendar have we this time—pretty full I believe?"

"Why, yes, rather so—this Whiteboyism has demoralized the whole country."

Mr. O'Callaghan smiled, and Maude continued:

"It is no longer safe for a gentleman, especially if he be a Protestant, to live in this neighborhood; these rascally papists are becoming quite savage on our hands. Don't you think so?"

"Why, really no," returned O'Callaghan. "Since you ask my opinion I must candidly tell you that Catholics have ever been, and still are, my very best neighbors, and even friends. I am one of those who do not believe the people to be half as bad as they are represented. Now, to go no farther than this case of Mr. Sheehy. I do not think there is a country in the whole civilized world where such a state of things could exist, save this unfortunate island of ours. The fact of it is, that unless the whole population of the neighborhood is in error, the man Bridge was no more murdered than I was, and if he were murdered at all, which I for one do not believe, I would stake my life for it that this unfortunate priest knew no more of it than did any of us. The thing is absurd, improbable, and if I am not altogether mistaken, this day's trial will prove it so."

"On what authority do you ground your very decided opinion, Mr. O'Callaghan?" inquired William Bagwell, with a sly wink at Maude, "for really it differs somewhat from ours."

"On what authority," repeated O'Callaghan, with honest indignation, for he well knew the men with whom he had to deal—"why, on that of an intimate friend of my own, in whose house Mr. Sheehy slept the *whole* of that night on which Bridge is supposed to have been murdered. Yes, gentlemen, and his testimony—undoubted as it must be—will put your crown witnesses to the blush, or rather those who employed them, for blushing is out of the question with *them*."

An angry flush was on the cheek of Maude, and a taunting reply on his thin lip, when a person entered to announce that the judge was entering the court-house.

"You'll soon see what your opinion is worth!" said the baronet with a malicious sneer, as he passed O'Callaghan on the staircase. "The *unblushing* witnesses may do as well as 'the intimate friend' of Mr. Cornelius O'Callaghan. Ha! ha!" His insolent laugh was echoed by his two worthy associates, but O'Callaghan did not condescend to answer.

The court-house was crowded above and below, but it was for the most part filled with partizans in the Orange interest. Few, very few of the Catholic party were allowed to enter, while the others were brought in from all parts, in order to make it appear

to the judge that public opinion was against the prisoners. The jury was to a man composed of rabid Orangemen, the officers of the court were of the same school, so that they had the game entirely in their own hands, and a fearful game they made of it.

That very morning, about three hours before the trial commenced, the witnesses for the prosecution were separately visited by one of the magistrates muffled up in a large cloak. The visit over, the same personage had a long conversation with one of his brethren, and its tenor might be gathered from its conclusion :

“So you think it would not be safe to try Meighan—we have shrunk from doing it all along, for the fellow has the name of being a good Catholic—that is to say, a staunch papist—but perhaps he might listen to reason, now that the trial is so near. There is yet time—if he could only be got to confess, and acknowledge that the priest urged him to do the deed. We might offer him something handsome.”

“I tell you it’s no use,” replied Hewitson, “it would only make matters worse—Meighan is a devilish obstinate fellow, and I know he would not turn against the priest, nor confess, as we facetiously call it, if you gave him your whole estate.”

“Well, really, these witnesses that we have are so *very* low and their character is so notorious that it is a great drawback on the whole affair. Is there none

of the witnesses on the other side that could be turned to account?"

"I am most happy to inform you that we *have* succeeded in getting one of them over,—a farmer of tolerable standing."

"And his name?"

"Herbert."

"Give me your hand, rector," cried Maude in a glow of exulting joy. "The gaining over of that man is the making of us all. I know him very well—he calls himself a papist, but I believe he is neither one thing nor the other, a sort of amphibious animal that can live in either church as it serves his turn. But you must have given him a high price?"

"His life, my friend, nothing less."

"Why, how is that? I heard nothing of his being in jeopardy?"

"Oh! but it was easy to put him in, when we found that he was one of Sheehy's main witnesses. The fear of death will bring a man to reason, when money will have no effect, so we sent and had him arrested, and Toohy swore against him for Whiteboyism. When he found himself actually in jail, he was very glad to be offered his freedom on the terms we proposed. So, give up the notion of sounding Meighan, for it would only ruin all—he'd be sure to throw it in our faces, and though his word would have no effect in point of law, yet it would be made a handle of hereafter, if anything came against us."

"And besides we can do without him now, thanks

to your friend Herbert. But let us be off, it's getting near the time. I think there's little doubt but we have our badger caught this time, *we're here on our own ground*, and we have another sort of man than Gore on the bench. The only thing I'm afraid of is Keating's evidence; how is that to be got over? You see Keating stands very high, d——I take the fellow! And they say he is to swear positively that Sheehy slept at his house on the very night in question. It is true, we have three *plumpers* against his one, but then the question is, whether there may not be others brought forward to support him."

"The subject requires serious thought," said the rector musingly, "and we have not much time to reflect upon it, for already I see the dragoons clearing the way for the judge. Come in here to the 'Spread Eagle,' *till we put our heads together*, as the saying is. Perhaps it may not be so bad after all. At all events let us consider it!" So in they went to "take sweet counsel" together on Keating's evidence, and the result of their deliberations will be seen hereafter. On coming out of the hotel, the first they met in the street was one of Father Sheehy's sisters, Mrs. Green, leaning on her husband's arm, for she seemed scarcely able to stand. Her face was closely veiled, but her whole frame was trembling with agitation.

"Mr. Hewitson!" said Mr. Green, unexpectedly accosting that portly gentleman, "the soldiers have refused us permission to enter the court-house—they say that they dare not admit us without orders from

some of the magistrates. Will you be so kind as to get us in. My wife would fain be present, though I would just as soon she were not."

"Well, really, Green," replied the fat dignitary, as he drew up his shirt collar, and stroked down his rosy chin, "well, really, you must excuse me. I regret exceedingly that we cannot comply with Mrs. Green's wishes, but women are the worst spectators on such occasions—they are apt to make too much noise, if anything excites their feelings. Good morning."

"Oh, my brother! my doomed brother!" cried the unhappy sister, "is there not one of your own kith or kin to be present when you're tried for life or death? May God forgive you, gentlemen, that's all *I* say. But there will come a day for all this, be assured there will!"

Her husband drew her away, while the two gentlemen laughed scornfully, as they bowed with mock respect and walked off towards the court-house. There was a deep flush on the cheek of Terence Green, and some bitter words were hovering on his lips, but he resolutely repressed his anger, for he was a prudent man, and well knew that any expression of resentment from him would be wrested into an assault by the worthy magistrates, who desired no better than to get a plausible excuse for taking Father Sheehy's friends into custody.

"Don't say anything to them, Mary dear," he whispered to his wife, "you know that that's all they

want, to get us to say or do them ill, that they may have us arrested. We'll leave them in the hands of God, darling, and let Him judge them. But I'm afraid it will go hard with his reverence this very day, for they have it arranged so that no one can get in without their knowledge—at least no one that could be of service to Father Nicholas, or poor Ned Meighan. Look, look, Mary!" he added, pointing down the street, "see, there are the crown witnesses going to the court-house. See, they have them guarded by a company of soldiers. Oh, then, blessed Mother!" he added bitterly, "look at Moll Dunlea, the infamous prostitute, dressed up in a cloak and bonnet, finer than ever she was before. And there's Toohy, in the apparel of a gentleman, and the young ruffian, Jack Lonergan—oh, then, oh, then, is it possible that any judge or jury will take *their* word—their oath against such a man as Father Sheehy? Come away, dear, come away, I can't stand this any longer."

The afflicted wife spoke not—she could not speak—but her tears fell fast and thick, as leaning heavily on her husband's arm she moved away.



CHAPTER IV.

LAW AND JUSTICE AS OPPOSED TO EACH OTHER

THE first trial that came on was that of Edward Meighan, the alleged murderer of John Bridge. When placed in the dock, the sunburnt face of the prisoner wore a satisfied and even an exulting smile, and there was triumph in the glance which he cast around. And well might it be so, for that humble son of toil had that very morning trampled on the glittering bait held out to him by the tempter, and spurned the degrading offer of pardon, involving as it did the sacrifice of principle.

The two magistrates whom we have seen discussing the question of attempting to bribe Meighan knew not that one of their brethren had already tried, and failed. This fact they only learned in the course of the day.

Early in the morning as Meighan sat alone in his dreary cell, thinking of his approaching trial, with the sad forebodings so natural to a husband and father in such a position, the door opened, and in came—not the jailer, but one of the magistrates, whom Meighan well knew. The prisoner stood up, and made a low bow, which the other returned, after carefully closing the door.

"Meighan!" said the gentleman, "you are aware, I suppose, that your trial comes on to-day?"

"Of coorse I am, your honor—I know it well."

"Has it ever occurred to you that you have it in your power to escape even a trial?"

"Well, no, sir!" said Meighan—"how could I think of sich a thing—once in here!" and he looked around with a visible shudder. "Once in here, there's no gettin' out without a thrial—every one knows that!"

"And yet there *is* a way," returned the visitor, speaking slowly and distinctly. "It *is* in your power—and I put it to you as a husband and father—ay! and as a son, if you are not bound to ward off the impending danger?"

"I don't know, sir, till I hear *how* I'm to do it, then I'll tell you whether I'm bound or not. *You* know *me*, sir, an' I know *you*—it's many a long day since you knew I was neither afeard nor ashamed to profess my religion, an' it's just as long since I knew that *you* had no love for Catholics, an' would go any length to see one of us out o' the way. Say what you have to say, then, without any comin' round about it."

There was an angry flush on the cheek of the magistrate, but he chose to assume a smile. "This is bold talking, Meighan," he said, "but it is quite characteristic—let us, however, come to the point at once. What hopes have you, in case you stand your trial?"

"Well—not much, your honor, not much. There's no one knows better than yourself that innocence is no security now-a-days. To be sure I have witness plenty to prove that I had nothing to do with this murder—even if the deed *was* done, but that won't save me, I know well—nor his reverence neither, God help us both!"

"You say you have no hope," said the visitor, not seeming to notice his last words—"well! here I stand who can set you free, even without a trial, and restore you to the wife and children and the aged father who are depending on you for support."

Meighan's eye glistened, and his cheek glowed. "And what would you have me do, sir? what price would you lay on my freedom?"

"Only turn king's evidence, confess yourself guilty, and swear that Sheehy employed you to make away with Bridge, and you are a free man—ay! and a rich one!"

"Don't say another word!" cried Meighan, "don't insult me any farther. I guessed what you were at from the very beginnin'. If I wasn't a prisoner, you daren't make sich an offer to me. Och! then, this is the worst of all, indeed it is!" and the poor fellow's tears burst forth like rain, notwithstanding all his efforts to restrain them.

"Then I suppose you reject my proposal?" said the magistrate coldly.

"Reject it!" said Meighan, in a voice half choked with emotion. "Oh! indeed I do then reject it.

Although I *am* in jail for *murder* (here he made the sign of the cross on his forehead), God hasn't given me up that way."

"Life is very sweet!" said the magistrate, "and it is the part of a fool to throw it away."

"Well! *I'd* throw away a thousand lives if I had them," exclaimed the prisoner fervently, "before I'd consent to swear away any one's life, an' the priest's above all!—och, then, Father Sheehy!" he added clasping his hands together, "did any one ever hear sich a thing as them to ask Ned Meighan to turn informer against you—*you* that's as innocent as the babe unborn—och, then, is there justice in heaven? for if there isn't God help us all! Ay! that 'id be a hearin' an' a seein', sure enough—Ned Meighan confessin' himself guilty of sich a crime—sich a black crime as that, an' swearin' that Father Sheehy bid him do it! I'll jist tell you what it is, sir," he added with a sudden change of manner—"the sooner you take yourself out o' my sight, I'll be all the better pleased."

"But remember your wife and children, and your old father!"

"I do remember them, an' I could never look one o' them in the face if I thought even for a minute of doin' the likes o' that. If it's God's will they must all bear up agin their heavy loss when I'm taken from them, but they'll never have it thrown in their faces that I done anything for them to be ashamed of—an' that 'id be the shame o' the world

if I tould a rie, an' swore to it, to add a few years to my life. Don't be uneasy about my family—for I know they're a great trouble to you all out—but jist go your ways. I'll not spake another word while you're in the place, so you'll be only losin' your time."

"Well, depend upon it, both you and the priest shall swing for it!"

"An' if we do, too, we're not the first that suffered in the wrong—nor we'll not be the last either, while the law is in the hands of you an' the like of you."

* * * * *

Two hours later, poor Meighan stood in the dock, and what wonder was it that his fine, manly face wore a look of triumph! But a saddened expression soon came over every feature, when in a corner of the court-house he recognized his aged father leaning on his stick. A glance of mournful meaning was exchanged between them, and then the old man raised his eyes to heaven, and pointed upwards with his finger. Just then the trial commenced. The witnesses for the prosecution were Mrs. Brady—(reader! it was the miserable prostitute Dunlea, who had borrowed the name of the soldier Brady with whom she then lived, in order to give a show of decency to her evidence)—Toohy, the notorious horse-stealer, and the vagabond Lonergan. These worthies all swore that Meighan had murdered Bridge, on the night of the 24th of October, by striking him on the head with a bill-hook, at a

signal from Father Sheehy. "Oh, then, glory be to God!" cried the prisoner when he heard this sworn for the first time, "if that doesn't beat all the swearin' ever man or mortal heard!—oh!—oh!— isn't it a wonder that the ground doesn't open under heir feet an' swallow them up!" "Silence there!" cried a stentorian voice, "not another word!" The prisoner was silent, but a deep groan burst from the oppressed heart of the poor old father, and he was heard to murmur, "*Wirra! wirra!* is it *him*—is it Ned to split any one's skull—oh! sweet mother Mary, are you listenin' to that?" "Silence in court!" roared the loud voice again, and all was still save the witness on the table. It was Toohy, who, dressed up for the occasion in a superfine blue coat, with black silk vest and knee breeches (as an eye-witness described him), made a very respectable appearance. Then followed Lonergan, who being no more than sixteen, and small in stature even for that age, was equipped in a long blue coat, reaching to his heels, with a view to make him appear older. All three had their lesson well learned, and there were no lawyers bold enough to cross-examine them, at least so as to test their evidence, and so the prosecution was triumphantly closed. "Well! but *we* have plenty of good, decent witnesses," said the father of Meighan in a low voice to those about him. "Thanks be to God! poor Ned has no want of evidence—these wretches 'll not have it all their own way."

"Husht! husht! Atty," said a friend near him, in a

low whisper. "God help us all! there's not much law for *us*! any one o' them blackguards that we heard swearin' sich barefaced lies will be worth half a dozen of Ned's witnesses—for all *they'll* be swearin' the blessed thruth. But, husht, we must keep silent or we'll be put out!"

The witnesses for the defence were numerous and of good character, and furnished overwhelming proof that Edward Meighan did not leave his own house all that night, when Bridge was said to have been murdered. Ay, it was proved beyond a doubt that the same Bridge had not been murdered, nor even molested on that night, having been seen by more than one individual some days later, and two men of fair, unblemished reputation swore positively that he had told them he was about to leave the country for fear of being taken by the soldiers. Such a body of clear, direct testimony in his favor might well lead the prisoner to reckon on an acquittal, and it was not strange to see the old man, his father, raise his hands and eyes to heaven with a fervent "thank God!" when the last witness for his son had left the table. As for Meighan himself he was thinking at that moment of the priest, and, knowing that the two cases were so closely connected, he, too, thanked God that Father Sheehy might yet escape. But all this was soon changed—the judge rose to charge the jury, and while he dwelt on the *positive* evidence for the prosecution, he declared *all* the other unsatisfactory and deserving of little or no attention.

A faintness came over the prisoner, and he leaned heavily against the railing of the dock, but in a moment he turned and looked towards his father. The poor old man was still there, leaning on his stick—his thin white hair thrown back from his forehead, and his eyes fixed with a wild, eager stare on the door where the jury had disappeared! nor did he once look at his son while the jury-box was empty, probably fearing that the sight might draw from him some exclamation which might attract observation, and be the cause of his being expelled from the court-house.

After a short deliberation the jury re-entered their box, and pronounced Edward Meighan GUILTY of the murder of John Bridge! A wild scream was heard from the body of the court-house, and poor old Meighan was seen lying pale and motionless in the arms of a bystander. The unhappy prisoner, forgetting even the awful words he had just heard, thought only of his father

“Och, then, isn’t there some good Christian there that’ll see to the poor ould man—the poor heart-broken ould man——”

“Ay, in throth is there, Ned!” said one and another, and several sturdy farmers gathered around the old man. “Don’t be frettin’ about him, for he’ll never want a friend—God pity him an’ you—an’ us all for the matter o’ that!”

“Well!” said poor Meighan, with a fain attempt at a smile, “well, sure enough if this is *law* it isn’t

justice—but it isn't the same in the other world—there we'll get justice—an' sure that's comfort. There'll be no perjured witnesses heard *there*. I suppose there's no use in me saying anything more, even if I was allowed—for what could I say only repeat again, which I will till my last breath, that I never harmed John Bridge, nor any other man—an' God knows that as well as I do."

"Take him away," shouted a loud authoritative voice, "and bring in Nicholas Sheehy."

A low murmur of indignation ran through the court, notwithstanding that scarcely any of the friends of the prisoner were present. The sound rose higher and higher during the time that intervened between Meighan's removal and the entrance of the priest, but when the latter was brought in and placed at the bar many voices were heard in various parts of the court-house crying out:

"May the Lord deliver you from your enemies, Father Sheehy dear!—but, ochone! you've only a poor chance afther how they've thrated Ned Meighan."

"The perjured villians," cried others—"they'll swear whatever comes before them, an' a man's life isn't worth twopence in their hands."

But all these friendly voices were speedily silenced—the prisoner was forbidden to speak—and the trial commenced.

While the first witnesses were examined, Father Sheehy appeared to listen with an expression of

earnest curiosity on his face, but he remained perfectly silent. From time to time as the wretched witnesses proceeded with their respective tales, he was seen to raise his hands and eyes to heaven in mute astonishment, as though wondering how any human being could imagine and relate such bare-faced falsehoods—sworn to, moreover, on the Holy Evangelists. There was a mournful look in his eyes, and a paleness on his cheek which denoted a failing spirit, but still he bore it bravely, considering his recent imprisonment, and the announcement of Meighan's conviction, which had reached him just as he entered the dock. The witnesses were the same who had sworn against Meighan; and when Moll Dunlea made her deposition, and swore positively that she had heard the prisoner tell Meighan to *give Bridge his dose* (meaning to strike him with his weapon). Father Sheehy was heard to murmur in an under tone—"Thou knowest, oh Omniscient God, that I never saw this unhappy woman till this present moment, though from her scandalous life I was obliged to excommunicate her."

Yet, though the scandalous creature and her worthy compeers swore in the most positive manner that Bridge had been murdered with his consent and approval—and though Meighan had been so lately condemned on the same testimony, notwithstanding his having abundant proof of being entirely innocent, yet still did Father Sheehy appear to hope on, while a shadow of hope remained. He had just

drawn himself up to his fullest height, after the examination of one of these hired witnesses, when he heard Patrick Herbert called, and forthwith that individual appeared on the table. A mortal paleness overspread the face of the prisoner, a sudden faintness came over him, and he would have fallen to the ground had he not caught the railing of the dock.

"Why," he said in a low voice, leaning over to his lawyer, "why, this was one of my witnesses—he knows very well that I wasn't within some miles of the spot where they say Bridge was murdered, on the night in question. "Good God! can *he*, too, consent to go against his conscience?"

Alas! he found that Herbert had been gained over by the threat of a prosecution for Whiteboyism, if he persisted in giving his testimony for the priest, and the crown lawyers fearing that the prisoner might have other witnesses brought forward in his place, if his dereliction were known to him in time, had purposely kept it concealed. Herbert was evidently a man of a timid, irresolute character, and now when he was swearing in direct opposition to his conscience, there was a tremor in his voice, and an agitation in his whole demeanor that spoke a mind ill at ease. It is true, his testimony was not very important, being indeed rather of a negative than a positive character, but still the desired end was gained, the prisoner was robbed of one of his best witnesses. Once, and once only, Father Sheehy forgot himself so far as to speak to him.

"Herbert! Herbert!" said he, "do you forget that God sees and hears you?" The judge sternly commanded him to be silent, and Herbert went on, though his varying color and faltering voice showed how deeply he felt the appeal. But he never once dared to raise his eyes towards the prisoner, but kept them cast down, while he hurried over the shameful business in hand scarcely making his replies intelligible, from the low, indistinct tones in which he spoke. As he was quitting the table, the full, deep voice—the well-known voice of the priest again reached his ear.

"Thank God! your conscience is yet alive. I see you are already tortured. Go, poor man—go and do penance; and may God forgive you, as I do."

The prosecution was closed and the defence commenced. Few were the witnesses called, but they were well worthy of credit, and their testimony, if not conclusive, was, at least, strongly presumptive of the fact that Father Sheehy was innocent of the crime laid to his charge. Still nothing very important had been gained for him, and his lawyer began to manifest a certain degree of impatience, when Mr. Keating, of Turbrid, was called, and instantly ascended the witness table. Mr. Keating was a man in the prime of life, with a singularly handsome countenance, whereon was stamped the candor and uprightness which belonged to his character, together with that look of benevolence which lends such a charm to "the human face divine." His fine

person was attired in those rich but unostentatious habiliments which distinguish the man of education and of good standing in society from the ephemeral fops who, having little else to recommend them, seem to devote all their energies to the one great business of "dressing fashionably." When Mr Keating had bowed to the court he turned and saluted the prisoner in the dock with as much respect as though he stood at the altar. A cheerful smile lit up the wan features of the persecuted priest as he returned the salute, and, moving a step forward, he seemed to await what was coming with renewed hope. He glanced towards certain of the magistrates, where they sat near the judge, and he could see that they regarded Keating with a scowl of suspicion and dislike. "Of course they hate him," thought he, "for they know that his testimony cannot be set aside, and must be conclusive in establishing my innocence. But he can set them at defiance—his character and station place him beyond their reach—heaven bless him and his!"

The testimony of Mr. Keating was to this effect, that Father Sheehy had slept at his house on the night when the murder was said to have been committed, and that he could not possibly have left the house during the night without his knowledge. Being asked could he then swear positively that the prisoner had not gone out in the night, he answered, "Yes, I can—on my oath, Father Sheehy went to bed at a rather early hour of the night, and did not

leave it again till the following morning was somewhat advanced."

"Thanks be to God!" murmured the prisoner, "they cannot go beyond that." And he saw with satisfaction that even the judge seemed strongly impressed with the conclusive nature of this evidence.

From the body of the court-house arose an enthusiastic shout of gladness, that made the roof ring,—many voices, too, were heard calling out: "Long life to your honor! it's *you* that can tell the truth. Success to you, Mr. Keating! Many's the good turn your honor done before now, but this is the best of all!" "God reward you, sir," cried another, while several were heard to say: "An' sure I could swear to the same thing—I was talkin' to him that evenin' on the lawn at Turbrid!" and so forth.

Mr. Keating was cross-examined according to the most conclusive method of making a witness perjure himself, but not a particle of contradiction could be elicited from him—his evidence was plain, unvarnished truth, and he was not the man to be embarrassed by the quibbling, or quirking, or punning of a crown-lawyer. Seeing that his inquisitor had paused, and manifested no intention of renewing his examination, the witness said:

"I presume, sir, you have nothing more to ask of me—may I be allowed to go down?"

"Ay, you may go!" said the man of law snappishly, "we have done with you."

Just then stood up the the rector of Clogheen, the Rev. Mr. Hewitson, and his rubicund face was bursting with importance. "Is not this," said he, "James Keating, commonly called, of Tubberett or Turbrid?"

"Why, certainly, Mr. Hewitson, that is my name and the name of my residence," replied Keating with evident surprise. "I should think the question was altogether superfluous here; there are few in this assembly to whom I am unknown."

"Well," said the portly dignitary of the established church, deliberately unfolding a written document, and glancing over its contents, "such being the case, I have to inform this worshipful court that said James Keating is on my list of disaffected and dangerous persons."

"I!" cried Keating in amazement—"I on your list?—why, in the name of all that is sacred, how come I on your list of disaffected persons? Who has dared to accuse me of crime?" He spoke with warmth—the honest fervor of indignant innocence.

"Pray be cool, sir," said Hewitson, with a sneering smile—"you are down *here* in black and white (laying his finger on the paper in his hand) as having been accessory to the murder of a sergeant and a corporal at New Market. As a natural consequence, your evidence is inadmissible."

"Gracious God!" exclaimed the prisoner, "wilt thou endure this?—wilt thou suffer this innocent man to be made the victim of these men's hatred of me?—is he to be involved in my ruin, because he

loved justice, and gave testimony to the truth ! Oh, Lord—oh, Lord ! I beseech thee that thou save *him* from the vengeful malice of our enemies. Do with *me* as thou wilt—I am a poor, insignificant individual, whose life is of small moment to any one—but, oh, my God, *his* life is valuable, and let not the persecutors of our faith take it away.” He spoke almost aloud, at the same time covering his face with both hands, as though to shut out the visible world, and for a moment there was a death-like silence in the court. It was but a moment—cries and sobs were heard around, and Mr. Keating spoke, but he spoke not for himself—thought not of himself. Turning towards the prisoner he said :

“Father Sheehy, they have devised this new plan to deprive you of the value of my evidence—may the All-merciful God protect you, for your last earthly hope is thus wrested from you.”

“Take him away!—take him away!” shouted Hewitson. “Handcuffs here quickly for the prisoner Keating!” And instantly two constables advanced to seize him.

“Stand back yet a moment !” said Keating, waving his hand with an air of dignity that awed the men ; “I must say a word at parting. My lord,” he said, bowing respectfully to the judge, “I address myself not to *that man* who has so conveniently found *my name on his list*—with him I have nothing to do, but to your lordship, and this honorable court, I must be permitted to say that, on the word and honor of

a gentleman—nay, on my solemn oath, Father Sheehy is as innocent of the crime laid to his charge as I am of this newly-coined indictment, and I think even those who are prejudiced against this persecuted priest must see that this accusation has been brought against *me* solely to deprive *him* of the benefit of my testimony, which they dared not attempt to set aside. Whatever comes of it, with regard to myself, I will bear my fate as a Christian and a man, and as I now see that my reverend friend is doomed, and perhaps myself, too, I can only pray that he and I may meet in that world where JUSTICE reigns supreme. Men! you can now put on your irons—Catholic gentlemen are well used to such ornaments in these ascendancy days.”

“My lord,” said Maude, rising from his seat behind the judge, for Hewitson was literally speechless with anger—“my lord, is not this man’s insolence deserving of punishment?”

“Which he is about to receive,” said the judicial functionary, with a bland smile. “You seem to forget, my excellent friend, that he is to be taken to prison forthwith, and there kept in chains, until such time as his trial comes on. Our reverend friend here has ordered him to prison, so rest contented.” Maude bowed, and smiled, and resumed his seat. Keating was quickly handcuffed, and carried off to solitary confinement—but before he went he bade adieu to Father Sheehy, and requested him to pray for him and his family.

"The blessing of God, and my blessing, be about you and yours, best and truest of my friends!" cried the priest, in a loud, distinct voice, "but fear not, Mr. Keating, —something tells me that God will not give *you* over to the Philistines. Go in peace, for your children shall not now be fatherless—you shall escape—I, the priest of the Lord, tell you so from Him!"

Mr. Keating could only smile and repeat the word, "Farewell!" till he was hurried out of sight. The judge turned a stern countenance on the priest:

"Prisoner," he said, with solemn emphasis, "I command you to be silent. Dare not again to disturb the peace of the court."

The prisoner bowed in silence, and folding his arms on his breast, stood calmly regarding the scene—as calmly as though he were no more than a casual spectator.

The novel method taken to do away with Keating's evidence had an effect which probably its inventors might have foreseen, viz.: that of deterring others who had it in their power to give evidence for the defence from coming forward. Whispered dialogues might have been heard in more than one place amongst the crowd.

"Why, then, Paddy Cusack," said one farmer in a low voice to his neighbor, "didn't you say a while ago that you'd go for'ad and prove that you were talkin' to Father Sheehy that very night in Mr.

Keating's parlor beyant—when you went to spake to him about christenin' the young one?"

"To be sure I did," replied honest Paddy, "but where 'id be the use o' me doin' it?—don't you see how they handled Mr. Keating himself, that's so high up in the world? and bedad it's hard to say they'd let *me* off aisy, that's only a poor cottier, God help me!"

"Ay, but aren't you bound to tell the thruth," persisted his friend, "an' more especially when it might sarve Father Sheehy?"

"Oh, ay, if it 'id sarve him," said Paddy briskly, "it's myself that would soon go for'ad if they were to hang me for it to-morrow; but you see, they're detarmined to bring him in guilty, an' all the evidence that we could give would be of no use—none in the world. Moll Dunlea and Jackey Lonergan—the devil's own boy—'ill be listened to, bekase they're paid to do *the dirty job*, but for an honest man to go up and tell God's thruth, as his conscience bids him, there'll be a deaf ear turned to him, an' he'll be *marked* into the bargain. God help poor Father Sheehy any way!" concluded Paddy with a deep-drawn sigh.

When the lawyer for the defence was asked whether he had any more evidence to bring forward, he answered in the negative, and begged to know whether Mr. Keating's evidence might not be allowed to stand good. He was roughly and sternly answered "no, sir!" and the judge arose to address the jury

He spoke for a considerable time, dwelling particularly on the well-known character of the prisoner at the bar as a demagogue and a political agitator, as a man who encouraged the ignorant and misguided people to throw off all restraint and rebel against the lawful authorities. After a little circumlocution he came to the murder of Bridge, and described it as being of the most atrocious kind. It had been clearly proved, he said, that the prisoner at the bar had, at least, encouraged the actual assassin to do the dreadful deed, and he charged the jury as loyal subjects and friends of humanity to do their duty fearlessly, as indeed he was convinced they would. The only allusion he made to the evidence for the defence was somewhat characteristic of the time. "There is abundant evidence," said he, "of the prisoner's guilt, but he has not a single witness to prove him innocent, notwithstanding his well-known and, indeed, baneful influence over the people. The only individual who could be found to give any important testimony for him is now in prison, on a charge of a precisely similar nature. Gentlemen of the jury, the case is now in your hands, and I am sure you will decide justly and according to the evidence before you."

The obsequious jurors bowed low to the compliment, and marched in rank and file from their box with becoming dignity of mien, to decide the fate of the celebrated Father Sheehy—the far-famed defender of the people's rights, and the benevolent

consoler of their griefs and misfortunes. While the jury-box was empty, the lonely occupant of the dock stood mute and motionless—his head thrown slightly forward, and his arms still crossed on his bosom. His eyes were fixed on vacancy, for his mind was far from the present scene—far, far away in the viewless realms of thought.

Suddenly a door opened, and he raised his head. The foreman of the jury entered the box, and after him came his brother jurors in succession. When all had gained their places, the foreman advanced to the front of the box, and announced that after the most mature deliberation they had found the prisoner, Nicholas Sheehy, *Guilty of the murder of John Bridge, that is to say, as having aided and abetted Edward Meighan therein.*

Again was the voice of wailing, loud and deep, heard echoing through the building—sighs and loud groans, and *ochone! ochone!* gave note that many a heart even in that packed assemblage sympathized with the unfortunate victim of injustice. But the prisoner himself only raised his eyes to heaven and said, “Even *this*, my God! even *this* can I bear! all things, whatsoever Thou wilt, whether they be good or evil! so long as Thou keepest me in the state of grace, I can cheerfully submit to Thy holy will.”

He was then removed, to be brought up the following day for sentence.

No sooner was the trial over than the most indecent triumph was manifested in and around the

court-house. The magistrates hurried out to congratulate each other on their success, and were to be seen here and there through the town shaking hands in open exultation. "Ha!" said the Bagwell brother who had been present at Father Sheehy's last trial, "ha! ha! Sir Thomas, he hadn't his Dublin mob this time at his back—it was easy to see that *we* were the rulers here, and I say now what I said *then*, that if he had been tried in Clonmel for that last affair, he would have had his desert long ago. But you know what the old saw says."

"Ay! ay!" laughed Maude, "*Better late than never*,—so say I, too, and it is well we have him snugly trapped at last."

* * * * *

Meanwhile a heartrending scene was going forward in that darksome cell which contained the prisoner, Meighan, Father Sheehy's companion in misfortune. An old gray-haired man, and a young, fair-faced woman were with him; it was his father and his wife, the mother of his three children. They had been admitted by the jailor as a special act of grace, and for some minutes none of the three could speak, they could only weep and look at each other in mournful silence—the silence of intense anguish. The convict spoke at last, when having once more embraced his wife, he took hold of his father's hand. "Sure I was lookin' at you in the court-house, father dear! an' God help us all, it was you I was thinkin' of, most o' the time, except when poor Biddy an'

the children 'id come into my head,—well! Biddy darlin', this is a black day to you *ma colleen dhas!* an' one that you never thought to see. But don't cry so, Biddy—don't dear, don't, it goes to my heart to see your tears. An' then there's no use in murmurin' or repinin'; if this wasn't the will o' God it 'id never come to pass, so let us thry to bear it as stoutly as we can."

"Oh! but, Ned!—Ned!" cried his wife, with a fresh burst of tears, "what in the world put it in any one's mind to swear murder against *you?*—och! och!—you of all people, you that wouldn't harm a dog, much less a Christian! aren't they worse than the devil himself that brought such a thing against you?"

"Well! you needn't wondher so much at that, Biddy dear," said her husband, "when they're now thryin' Father Sheehy for the same offence. Oh, then, it would be no way strange if God would rain down fire from heaven and consume them off the face of the earth."

"But, Ned dear," said his father, wiping away the tears with the back of his hand—"do you think what'll they do to you an' Father Sheehy—if they bring *him* in guilty, too?"

"An' they will, father, you may be sure they will," said Edward earnestly—"they're bent on doin' it, an' do it they will, by hook or by crook. Sure wasn't one o' the magistrates here with me this very mornin' wantin' me to turn king's evidence an' swear against

him, an' if I would that they'd save my life—ay! without ever a thril at all—an' make me a rich man besides."

"An' you refused to do it?" cried the wife and father in the same breath, and, with startling earnestness, leaving it doubtful whether they approved of the step or not.

"Refused!" repeated Edward—"refused, is it? why don't you both know very well that I wouldn't listen to such an offer!—God sees only I was handcuffed I'd have sent him out head foremost, prisoner an' ail as I was. I would indeed—worse than hang me they couldn't do, an' *that* they'll do any way. Refused to do it—to be sure I did, and why not?"

"That's my own darlin' son," said the old man fervently, "if you consented to do sich a shameful thing you'd be the death of your father, but now I'm proud and happy—proud an' happy though my one son is in your place, Ned Meighan! I can bear all now!" murmured the poor old man.

"An' me too, Ned, me too!" and the heart-broken wife fell once more into her husband's outstretched arms—"thanks be to God you had the grace to thrate their offer as it desarved. I'll be a poor, sorrowful woman all the days of my life if they take you from us, *agra gal*, but then I'm thankful withal that you have done your duty to God an' to his reverence that's in sore peril. Oh! but then when I think—when I think of the time that's comin'!——"

“Come away both of you, the time’s expired!” growled a voice at the door, and in a moment the old man and his daughter-in-law were hurried away without being allowed to say *farewell*!



CHAPTER V.

THE LAST ACT OF THE TRAGEDY.

At an early hour on the following day the prisoners were brought up to receive their sentence, and poor Meighan's turn came first. He received the sentence of death with surprising fortitude, considering him as a man without education. But though wholly ignorant of book-learning, he was a Catholic, and well instructed in the elevating doctrines of the Christian faith, and such a man can never be called uneducated, for he is educated for eternity. His wife was present, and so was his father, and when they heard the dread sentence pronounced, they clung to each other, as though for support, one deep, heart-breaking groan from the old man, and a single exclamation of, "Oh, God pity us, God pity us!" from the pale lips of poor Biddy, and then both were silent—they did not even shed a tear—such grief as theirs cannot weep. Poor Edward Meighan was removed, and a dead silence fell upon the crowded court—expectation was on every face, and all eyes were turned towards the door leading from the jail. It opened, and Father Sheehy was brought in. He walked with a firm step to the front of the dock, and placing his two hands on the railing, made a low bow to the

judge, and then looked around as though to see was there any one face that he could recognize as that of a friend. There were many, for the trial was over, and the prisoner convicted, and it was just as well to let the papists be present to hear the priest sentenced. Many a kindly eye was beaming on him—many more were filled with tears as they gazed, and a faint gleam of satisfaction flitted over his face. Having returned the salute of those who ventured to bow to him, Father Sheehy turned towards the bench. The judge had on the awful *black cap*, and his long pale face looked ghastly and grim as he gazed on the prisoner, but the latter shrank not. “Nicholas Sheehy!” said the judge, “Have you any reason to offer why sentence of death should not be passed upon you?”

“My good lord!” said the priest, with a simple earnestness of manner that touched every heart that was not steeled by prejudice—“my good lord! I am aware that your question is a mere form, and that anything I can or could say would have no effect—still, as the opportunity is afforded me, I must say that I am entirely innocent of the crime—the heinous crime of which I have been convicted. Not only am I innocent thereof, but, to the best of my belief, no such murder has been committed. I am almost fully persuaded that this very John Bridge is still living, for we have the clearest evidence that some days subsequent to the date of the supposed murder the man was seen alive and in good health,

and took leave of his friends to go to either Cork or Kinsale to embark for some foreign country.

Here the excitement throughout the court became so great that the judge was obliged to interfere, and commanded all to be silent, under pain of being expelled from the court-house. To the prisoner he said: "This is totally irrelevant. Have you nothing to say that bears upon your own individual case?"

"My lord! it appears to me that I speak to the purpose—surely I do when myself and another are to be put to death for a crime which *never was* committed by any one. Knowing, or at least believing this to be the case, I protest against the entire proceedings, as regards Meighan and myself, and *will* protest until my latest moment against the shameful injustice, the gross perjury, the deadly malice of which we are the victims. In conclusion I must declare that notwithstanding all this, I bear these unhappy men who persecute me even to death not the slightest ill-will; I leave them in the hands of a just God, knowing that He will deal with them according to their deserts! That is all I have to say! I leave God to distinguish between the innocent and the guilty!"

The judge had listened with evident impatience and scarcely was the last word uttered when he arose, and putting up his right hand he drew down his ghastly cap over his brows, saying in a deep, guttural voice: "Then it becomes my painful duty

to pronounce the awful sentence which the law prescribes. Since you seem disposed to deny your guilt, clearly as it has been established, you are to be considered as still unrepenting. You shall be hanged, drawn, and quartered, on Saturday next, the 15th inst., and may God have mercy on your soul, and grant you a sight of the enormity of your crime !”

“It is well !” replied the undaunted priest, “and I thank your lordship for your good wishes. Doubtless I have much to answer for before God, since we are all sinful creatures at the very best, but He knows that of this crime, or aught like unto it, I am wholly innocent. To His justice I fearlessly and with all confidence give myself up—praise, honor and glory to His holy name now and forever more, and may His will be done on earth as it is in heaven !”

Here the long-restrained feelings of Father Sheehy’s friends burst forth anew—sighs and groans, and half-stifled exclamations of horror and of pity were heard on every side, and it required all the authority of the judge to restore anything like order. In the midst of the tumult the prisoner was removed, and very soon after the court adjourned till the following day.

During the short interval between the sentence and its execution nothing could equal the excitement of the public mind. People of all classes felt themselves deeply interested ; the Catholics, of course,

were filled with indignation, for the trial and conviction of Father Sheehy and Meighan had outraged every sense of justice, being the very climax of shameless corruption, and a direct violation of all law, human and divine. There were few men of his day so popular as Father Sheehy, and the people seemed everywhere to regard him as the victim of his high-souled generosity and undisguised sympathy with them in their sufferings. It required, indeed, all the influence of the priests to keep them from pouring into Clonmel and attacking the jail. In their ardent attachment to Father Sheehy they utterly lost sight of their own safety, and would have rushed on certain destruction, without even a chance of saving the doomed victim of religious intolerance and political hatred. The jail was constantly surrounded by a strong military force, some of Lord Drogheda's troops having been brought from Clogheen to reinforce the garrison.

By a great stretch of favor his own immediate family were permitted to see him, and also Father Doyle, as his spiritual director. His demeanor was calm during all those mournful days, and he even succeeded in cheering and consoling his afflicted relatives by his glowing descriptions of the joy which awaits the blessed in the other world—in that world whither he was hastening. He studiously diverted their minds from the violent death which awaited him, and dwelt on the joy of being released from the miseries of this life, the bliss of shaking off "this

mortal coil," and putting on the robes of immortality. "And then," said he, "as for the dark stain which will rest on my character, even that need not distress you, my kind friends! for I feel assured that the all-righteous God will clear up this fearful mystery, and show forth my innocence and that of poor Meighan. On this head I have no fears."

It was the day before that appointed for his execution, and Father Sheehy had just parted with his two sisters, and some other dear friends, of whom he begged that they would not ask to see him on the following day, "for," said he, "as I am to-morrow to appear before my God, I would rather be left to undisturbed preparation. Let none of you come near me, then, for I would fain break asunder now of my own free will those bonds of earthly affection—those 'cords of Adam' which death will rend to-morrow. Go now, my sisters—and may God bless you and yours, and guide you safe into the port of salvation—for shame!—for shame!—why weep so bitterly?—why, one would think you had but little of the Christian's hope. Do you not know and *feel* that we shall meet again—probably very soon, in that heaven where our Divine Master lives to welcome our coming? Only keep your last end continually in view, so as to avoid sin, as much as in you lies, and I will venture to predict a happy meeting for us all, knowing that the God whom we serve delights in showing mercy to the contrite sinner. Farewell, be of good cheer—and forget not to pray

for me when I am gone hence!" So saying he took the hand of each sister in his own, and held them a moment there, while with eyes raised to heaven he invoked a blessing on their heads, again exhorted them to be of good heart—to which they only replied by a doleful shake of the head, and a fresh burst of tears. "No—no, no!" murmured Mrs. Burke, the elder, "there's no use in telling us that, when we have *to-morrow* before us. I'm afraid its little joy or pleasure we'll ever have in this world, after such a blow as *this*."

"May the Lord pity us!" ejaculated the younger. "Oh! Katty dear, how will we stand it at all? when I think that to-morrow the best of brothers is to die such a death, and his life sworn away by such vermin, too! oh, blessed Mother, it makes my blood boil, and it seems as if my poor brain was turning!"

By this time the afflicted sisters had reached the street, and went off together to their lodging-house, for their husbands had remained behind at the priest's request, to receive some instructions which would have been too harrowing for them to hear. Martin O'Brien just then came in, and Father Sheehy told him with a smile:

"Just in time, Martin, to hear my last will and testament."

O'Brien wrung his outstretched hand in silence, more eloquent than words could have been.

"When I shall have suffered the extreme penalty of the *law*," said he, laying a strong emphasis on the

last word, "you will bury all of this poor body that you may be able to obtain, in the old churchyard of Shandraghan. It is not, to be sure, where you would wish to lay my remains, but I bespoke my lodging there, some months ago. You will make my grave close by that old vault, under the shade of a gnarled elm which overhangs the spot. Tell Billy Griffith that his noble protection of a poor, persecuted priest will be remembered even in heaven, if I am so happy as to reach there, and that my blessing rests and shall rest upon him and his children. You will also give him this watch" (it was a large, old-fashioned silver one)—it is the only treasure I possess on earth, and I would fain send that excellent friend a token of my gratitude. Tell him to keep it for my sake, it is all I have to give him. To you, Thomas Burke, I give this silver snuff-box—and do you, Terence, keep this little ivory crucifix," drawing forth one which he wore on his neck, "but *your* legacy is only reversional, my dear fellow," he added with a melancholy smile, "for you are not to have it till after my death. Then you are to take possession, but I have worn it for many a year, and I cannot part with it while life remains. For you, Martin! I have reserved my beads, which I value very highly, for they were given me when life was warm and young within me, by one of the professors in Louvain. My breviary and a few other books I have given to Father Doyle, and so I have already bequeathed all my effects—my body to Shandraghan, and my soul to God, if He

will deign to accept the offering. Not a word now—not a word!” he said, seeing that some of his listeners were about to speak. “I’ll not hear a word spoken with such a doleful face as that. O’Brien!” he suddenly added, “we had little thought of *this* when discussing the matter on Arran Quay, as we walked along, looking down on the black, muddy Liffey. I know not what *you* might have thought, but for myself I can safely say that I never dreamed of such an end.”

“Truly,” interrupted Martin, endeavoring to speak in a cheerful tone, “truly I must say, Father Nicholas! that I have always had a misgiving on my mind, ever since I heard the report of Bridge’s murder. That report is the unfortunate cause of this dreadful catastrophe.”

“Not at all, Martin—not at all,” replied the priest briskly, “the cause lies farther back, and may be traced to the active part I took in getting the church-rates knocked off in a parish where they ought never to have been paid, seeing that it contained not a single Protestant, and then in my encouraging the people to resist that novel and most unjust marriage-tax, these are the *first causes*: this pretended murder of Bridge is but an adjunct of the main scheme, for if his disappearance had not furnished a weapon against me, they would have found another. My only grief is for poor Keating—God knows what is to become of him—and this unfortunate Meighan, who leaves so many helpless

mourners behind him. But I trust God will provide for them, since He sees fit to deprive them of their main support."

"With regard to Mr. Keating," interposed Burke, "I hear he has been sent to Kilkenny jail, so that he'll not be tried here."

"Thank God for that same!" exclaimed Father Sheehy with fervor. "He has, then, a much better chance of escape—I am truly rejoiced to hear that he is not to be tried in Clonmel. Should any of you ever see him again tell him how anxious I was about him, and that my prayers were continually offered up on his behalf, that God might reward his goodness even in this life by delivering him from the hands of his enemies.* You, Martin O'Brien, will pay a visit as soon as possible after *to-morrow* to Mr. Cornelius O'Callaghan, and thank him for his kind and respectful treatment of me. Tell him how deeply grateful I was, and that I remembered his disinterested kindness to the last moment of my existence. I believe this is all," and he looked around with a pleased expression of countenance, "my wordly affairs are now arranged, and I am at full liberty to attend to 'the one thing needful'—

* It was fortunate for Mr. Keating that he was tried in Kilkenny rather than Clonmel, for there the Orange faction was not so powerful, and the jury scouted the evidence brought against him, being chiefly the same miscreants who had prosecuted Father Sheehy. The consequence was that the injured gentleman was honorably acquitted, and Father Sheehy's prediction verified.

my final preparation for eternity. Father Doyle promised to come back this evening, and I hope to receive the adorable Sacrament to-morrow morning for my *viaticum*. So now, my dear friends! you will leave me to myself awhile—my soul must needs prepare to meet the bridegroom and secure his approbation before he ascends the tribunal of judgment. God be with you till we meet again.” He then shook the hand of each in turn, and they quitted the prison in silent anguish.

The cold, sharp wind of march—wild stormy March—was careering over the earth when on Saturday, the 15th of that month, Father Sheehy was brought out from his cell to undergo the murderer’s punishment. He was attended by his faithful friend and spiritual director, Father Doyle, and of the two the latter showed far more dejection than the prisoner—the felon. They came out on the lap-board in front of Clonmel jail, and there stood side by side, while one loud, long shout of sorrowful greeting arose from the assembled multitude. Sighs and groans were heard on every side, and many a convulsive sob even from the bosom of brave and stout-hearted men.

“Och! then may the Lord prepare a place for you in the glory of heaven this day, Father Sheehy dear!”

“Ay, if he hadn’t been so thrue to us,” responded another, “he wouldn’t be where he is this sorrowful mornin’. It’s because he always stood up for *us*

that he's brought to this untimely end! The Lord be good an' merciful to him as he was to us, anyhow!"

"Och, then, your reverence! won't you give us all your blessin', sure it's the last time we can ask it of you, an' sore hearts we have for that same."

Father Sheehy's eyes filled with tears as he advanced to the front of the board, and raising his right hand made the sign of the cross over the heads of the crowd below. "May the Almighty God, before whose judgment seat I am about to appear, bless and protect you all, and may he grant to each of you the graces of which you stand most in need!—may He preserve you steadfastly in the true faith by which alone salvation is to be obtained. I need scarcely tell you, my good people, that I die entirely innocent of the foul crime laid to my charge. As for those who have persecuted me even to death, and the jury who condemned me on such evidence, I forgive and pity them all, and would not change place with any one of them for all the riches of the earth: The care of my reputation I leave to my God—He will re-establish it in His own good time. In conclusion, I pray you all to retire quietly to your homes, and make no disturbance, for that would only give a pretext for fresh persecution."

He then shook hands with the priest, and begged to be remembered in his prayers, then calmly turned and made a signal to the hangman. That functionary was prompt in his obedience—a moment and

the body of Father Sheehy swung in the air—another, and he had ceased to breathe—the pain of death was passed—Heaven in mercy had made it but momentary, and the wild scream that arose from the multitude below, loud and heart-piercing as it was, rolled away, unheard by him, and mingled with the boisterous wind that filled the air around.

“May the Lord God of Hosts have mercy on your soul, Nicholas Sheehy!” exclaimed Father Doyle, loud enough to be heard by the people in the street. “He will not refuse you that justice which your fellow-men withheld from you. A melancholy death was yours, but your soul has, I trust, found favor before God, for you were indeed free from guile.”

But all was not yet over. The body of the martyred priest was cut down and taken away to undergo the remainder of the sentence—*hanging* was not enough for the brutal spirit of the Protestant ascendancy—the poor, lifeless frame was to be *drawn and quartered*; and while the task was being accomplished, Edward Meighan was brought out on the lapboard. He, too, declared his innocence in the most positive terms, and offered up an affecting prayer for those who had sworn away his life—for the jury who had condemned him on their false testimony, and for the judge who had passed sentence upon him. He also repeated his solemn declaration of Father Sheehy’s innocence.

“Though I know,” said he, “that he is already gone where I am soon to follow, but still it’s right

to speak the thruth to the very last. That good priest has been put to death wrongfully, an' when they done it to him that was God's own servant, they may well do it to me—poor, sinful man that I am—though, thanks to the great God, I'm as innocent of this murder as the child unborn. That's all I have to say, only that I freely forgive all my enemies, and pray God to have mercy on my soul, an the Blessed Virgin, an' all the saints to pray for me, an' for them I leave behind."

He was launched into eternity almost before the words were uttered—no, not quite so soon, for his sufferings were somewhat longer than those of the priest,—for two or three minutes he struggled in the agony of his violent death, and then all was still—all, at least, save a low moaning sound that arose from under a neighboring gateway where old Atty Meighan and his miserable daughter-in-law had taken refuge. A few of their neighbors and friends had gathered around them, and were bestowing upon them such consolation as they could; but their words made little or no impression on the heart-broken sufferers, who could only sigh and moan, and look into each other's eyes, and grasp each other's hands in silence—their anguish was far too great for words, and not one tear did either shed. Their faces were pale—pale and haggard—their eyes wild and blood-shot, and the old man's thin gray hair hung unheeded around his face, while poor Biddy's fair tresses were scarcely concealed by the

little linen cap that was their only covering, for the hood of her blue cloak had fallen back. Neither of the two had ventured to look out on the fearful scene just enacted, but they knew and felt that all was over, and that their main stay was gone—the cries of the appalled spectators had told them of the dreadful fact, and they felt as though utter darkness had fallen on the earth, and a crushing weight on their hearts. Poor, lonely mourners—that frail old man, tottering on the verge of the grave, and that young woman—the mother of three fatherless children—with her small, fair features shrunk and wasted as though by the hand of disease—mortal disease. Poor old father, and poor heart-broken wife—the strong and vigorous arm that had supported them was now wrenched from them, and stiff in death, and the kindly heart that had loved them—oh, how well!—was cold, cold and dead. And if he had died a natural death—if he had died with his friends around him, kneeling in prayer, and closed his eyes in peace, what would it have been—at least so they thought. At that moment no thought of consolation entered their minds, but afterwards, when time had somewhat dulled the acute anguish of that terrible day, they found comfort in the remembrance of his “having had the priest.” “Sure he died a good Christian, as he lived. Father Doyle had given him the rites o’ the Church, an’ the good God be praised for it, he died an innocent man. May the Lord be good and merciful to your soul, Ned Meighan.”

Such was the winding up of many a conversation amongst the friends and neighbors of the dead.

The crowd was dispersed at the point of the bayonet—the streets of the old town were again quiet and lonely-looking, and their silence was the silence of death, for the majority of the inhabitants had closed their houses in token of sympathy and respect for the innocent victims of unjust *law*. Everything wore an aspect of mourning, borrowed in part from the cold, cheerless weather, and the dim gray light that struggled through the dark masses of cloud which obscured the firmament. Such was the aspect of Clonmel when on that inauspicious evening, about an hour before sunset, a strange and ghastly spectacle was presented to the eyes of those who passed by the prison. Over the arched porch of the old jail was hoisted on a pole the severed head of the ill-fated priest, the well-known features little changed, were it not for the unnatural purple hue diffused over all—the natural effect of the fearful death which had parted soul and body.

The Catholics who had occasion to pass that way hurried on with a shudder and murmured “Lord have mercy on him!” as they glanced at the dreadful object over the gateway, but there were scores of hearts in Clonmel that evening that exulted in the “day’s work done.” In many a tavern through the town there was merry-making and carousing, for the Orangemen held ‘high holiday,’ and their leaders pledged each other in foaming tankards to

the further success of *the good cause*, and the greater downfall of Pope and Popery. Many of them there were who were not ashamed to boast of having "sent Sheehy to where he ought to be long ago."

"Here's may the ould fellow give him his warmest corner," said one big, burly Orangeman, as he tossed off his glass of "the rale stuff" at the bar of the "Spread Eagle."

"Ay! an' that all the priests in Ireland may soon get their due, as he got it—that's the worst I wish them, Davy Robinson!" cried another, as he followed the other's example, and swallowed his potation, nothing loth, then laid down the capacious measure, and smacked his lips approvingly.

And how all that faction did exult, and lord it over the prostrate Catholics, and boast that many more of them would share the fate of Sheehy and Meighan before all was over. "We have Keating fast enough," would they say, "and there'll be more *in* for this same affair before the week's over."

And it was too true,—only a few days had past when several other Catholics of respectable standing were arrested on the same charge, two of them being relatives of Father Sheehy. One of these, Roger Sheehy, was acquitted out of very shame, but was brought up again on a fresh accusation, a little while after. However, God saw fit to bring him unharmed out of the hands of his enemies. Of the others, three were executed, viz., Edmund Sheehy, a second cousin of the priest, and a gentleman of excellent

character, who left a wife and four young children to bewail his untimely end—also James Farrell and James Buxton, both of whom were men of education and in good circumstances. Seven or eight others were tried and acquitted, evidently in order to save appearances, as they were nearly all bound over before they left the court to appear at an early day to answer sundry charges of high treason.

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Many years had rolled away, and still the head of Father Sheehy was bleaching over the porch of Clonmel jail, harrowing the hearts and souls of the people. Many applications had been made by his friends to have it removed, but all in vain, until more than twenty years had passed away since it was hoisted there—grisly monument as it was, with its fleshless bones and eyeless sockets, and the fearful associations clinging around it—memories of vile injustice, and gross perjury, and religious intolerance, and cruel oppression. Oh yes, truly it was a mournful spectacle—the head of that martyred priest; and, what made it more mournful still was the entire establishment of Father Sheehy's innocence only a few years after his execution, in direct fulfilment of his prediction. But by a special ordination of retributive justice, before that head was withdrawn from the public gaze, scarcely one individual who sat on Father Sheehy's jury remained alive—all, or nearly all had been cut off by strange and sudden deaths—some of them died of diseases too loathsome to

mention—one, in a state of raving madness, biting and gnawing his own flesh—another killed by a fall from his horse, and so on of all the rest, with only one or two exceptions.* As for the miserable witnesses who had sworn away so many innocent lives, their fate was just what might be expected. The wretched Moll Dunlea was killed by falling into a cellar in the city of Cork, while Lonergan finished his ignoble career in that disgrace to Dublin—Bar-rack street—the victim of his own evil courses. Poor, poor wretch—he was still young in years when the measure of his iniquities was filled up, and the thread of his life was cut short by the avenging hand of God.

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It was seven years after the death of Father Sheehy when a native of Clogheen entered a tavern on the bleak coast of Newfoundland, in company with another person with whom he had been trans-acting some business, and they went in to have a friendly glass together before they parted. While they were sitting at a table, chatting over the bargain just concluded, and sipping at intervals their whiskey-punch, our Clogheen man suddenly fixed his eyes on the face of one who just then came into the shop. Starting from his seat, he darted forward and caught the new-comer by the breast:

* This is all strictly true—throughout all the southern province the doom which fell on Father Sheehy's jury is everywhere known and talked of.

"Tell me, honest man!" he exclaimed, "are you not from Tipperary, Ireland?"

"Why, then, indeed I am," said the other, looking askance at his assailant, and endeavoring at the same time to shake off his grasp.

"Were you ever in Clogheen?" persisted Peter Crowly, still holding him fast, and looking into his very eyes.

"Is it in Clogheen?—oh, bedad, if I had a shillin' for every time I was in it, it's myself 'id be the rich man all out. Why, man alive, I was bred an' born athin two or three miles o' that same place."

"And your name?" asked Crowly, with a sort of convulsive trembling that indicated the deepest emotion.

"Why, one 'id think you were some lawyer or another—the way you go on wid your questions; but if you want badly to know my name, sure it's John Bridge—divil a hair I care who hears it."

"I knew it! I knew it the minnit I seen your face!" shouted Peter, as letting go his hold he dropped heavily on his seat, while Bridge stared on him in utter amazement, and the others who were present gathered eagerly around to learn the meaning of his strange conduct.

"What did you know, *ahagur*?" demanded Bridge in his own simple way, "that is, if it's no harm to put the question."

"I knew it was *John Bridge* that stood before me

—an' only it was broad daylight I'd have taken you for a ghost."

"Arrah, then, what in the world wide put that in your head? Faith, dear, yourself looks as much like a dead man as I do. Ghost, indeed! no more ghost than another, for the matther o' that."

"An' how did you get here at all, or what made you lave home?" inquired Crowly, making an effort to collect his thoughts.

"Och, then, if you're from Clogheen yourself," returned Bridge, "sure you can't but know that. Didn't I run away to Cork for fear o' being taken an' put in again for *what you know*. Faix I got enough o' the law, for the very flesh was torn off my back, an' all to make me swear agin them that was as innocent as the child in the cradle. Sure they wanted even to make me sware agin his reverence, Father Sheehy."

"Ah, then, but that same goin' away of yours was the unlucky move, all out, an' the manes o' many valuable lives bein' taken away."

"Why, Lord bless me! how is that?" demanded Bridge, his round bullet eyes dilating with intense curiosity; "how did that happen, or what do you mane at all?"

"Why just this," said Crowly, with slow and solemn emphasis on every word, "just this—that there was a report got up that you were murdered, an' no less than five men were hanged for that same. An' listen here, John," he added, lowering his voice

almost to a whisper, "listen here, *Father Sheehy was one o' the five!*"

An exclamation of horror escaped from every individual present, and Bridge reeled back against the wall, literally gasping for breath.

"Hanged!—five men hanged for killin' *me!* and *the priest* among the rest. Oh, Lord! oh, Lord! cross o' Christ be about us!" and he made the sign of the cross on his forehead and chest. "An' the only one that ever hurted me was that vagabone that whipped me for the magisthrates. Och, och, Father Sheehy, dear, didn't I go an' get your blessin' jist before I came away; an' sure you gave me a bright silver crown, though it's not much you had to spare. Och, *wirra! wirra!* Arrah, then," he suddenly asked of Crowley, "was there no one to go for'ad an' prove that I wasn't killed at all—sure didn't I tell many a one that I was goin' to lave the counthry, an' the rayson why I did it, an' all?"

"Yes," said Crowley, and the tears almost choked him, "yes, there was no less than three of them proved *that*, but their evidence wasn't listened to, because *they* wanted to get poor Father Sheehy an' the others out o' the way, seein' that they were Catholics, an' well thought of by the people. If God doesn't rain down vengeance on them all, root an' branch, then I'll say he's not a just God, after all!"

"Is John Brien, the dancin' master, living still?" inquired Bridge, when he had a little recovered the

shock of these strange tidings—"sure, if he's a livin' man, couldn't he clear every one o' them, if there wasn't another but himself, for the very day before I left home, I told him in private what I was goin' to do, an' bid him farewell, bekase I had a great regard for him."

"Indeed, then, he is alive," replied Crowly, "or at least was then, for he proved on the table, in my own hearin', just what you're afther tellin' me, but it was all no use. By the powers! if St. Peter himself came down an' proved Father Sheehy innocent his oath wouldn't be b'lieved again Moll Dunlea's or Jacky Lonergan's. Well, boys, there's no use in talkin', but God's above, an' sees all that's done—that's one comfort."

"And do you really mean to say," asked the landlord, who was a native of the United States, "that five men were executed for the murder of this man here, whom I have known off and on for six or seven years—one of them a Catholic priest, too, in a Catholic country like yours?"

"It's as true as the Gospel, Mr. Hunter," replied Crowly, "an' as for poor Father Sheehy, his head was on a spike on the top of a long pole over the jail-gate the last time I was in Clonmel, an' I suppose it's there yet, whoever sees it."

"Well, I guess you wouldn't catch *me* taking up my quarters in such a country as that. If that is the sort of law you have in Ireland, I wonder the people don't take it in hands, and make laws for themselves."

“So they do, sir, so they do, but only of late days. They’re beginnin’ to try an’ get justice for themselves, when it won’t be given them. Sure that’s the rayson of all this Whiteboy work, an’ these night meetin’s an’ everything o’ that kind. The poor Catholics see plain enough that there’s nothing for them but the worst o’ thratement, an’ hangin’ them up like dogs for no rayson at all, only because they won’t give up their faith; an’ as they can’t nor won’t do that, they must only combine together, an’ take the law into their own hands, when they can’t expect justice from them that’s set over them.”

While the conversation went on in this strain, poor Bridge withdrew into a corner, blubbering and crying like a child, and wiping away his fast-falling tears with an old blue handkerchief which he took out of his hat. Every now and then he was heard muttering: “An’ they hanged Father Sheehy, the black-hearted villains! Och! och! then hadn’t he the hard heart all out that put a rope round *his* neck—*him* that was so good and kind to every one. Oh, *wirra! wirra!*—but I hope he’s happy anyway, for if he isn’t God help the world—that’s all *I* say! Och, wasn’t it quare, too, to hang them all for killin’ *me*, an’ me alive an’ well—sure it bates the divil.”

“True for you, John,” said Crowly, catching up his last words, “the ould boy himself couldn’t do a blacker deed—but I must jist go off now an’ write home to the magistrates that I seen you here.”

"Oh! for God's sake, don't!" cried the poor simple fellow—"sure they tell me that I could be taken up here jist as well as if I was still in Ireland, on account of the place belonging to the king—so every one tells me, an' if they knew I was here they'd be sendin' afther me, an' I'd be hanged for bein' a Whiteboy. Oh, faix I would!"

"But wouldn't it be a thousand pities not to let them know that you're alive? Couldn't you go to the States, man alive! and then there'd be no danger of you bein' taken?" But nothing he could say would induce Bridge to consent, so great was his terror of the *law*, and he seemed to be under the impression that he would not be safe anywhere, if it were known that he was alive.

* * * * *

Mrs. Burke at length succeeded in obtaining possession of her brother's head, or rather, skull, from the pole whereon for upwards of twenty years it had remained—the dreary sign-post of Clonmel jail. Many of the friends of the family accompanied her on this melancholy errand, and a box being prepared for the purpose, the head was conveyed to Shandraghan, and deposited in the coffin with the remains of its kindred body. And there may the grave of Father Sheehy still be seen, with its white tombstone, bearing the following inscription:

"Here lieth the remains of the Rev. Nicholas Sheehy, parish priest of Shandraghan, Ballysheehan, and Templehenev. He died March 15th—1766 aged

38 years. Erected by his sister, Catherine Burke, *alias* Sheehy."

I cannot better conclude this melancholy sketch than by quoting the words of Dr. Madden: "Beside the ruins of the old Church of Shandraghan, the grave of Father Sheehy is distinguished by the beaten path, which reminds us of the hold which his memory has to this day on the affections of the people. The inscriptions on the adjoining tombs are effaced by the footsteps of the pilgrims, who stand over his grave, not rarely or at stated festivals, but day after day, as I was informed on the spot, while the neglected tomb of the proud persecutor, William Bagwell, lies at a little distance unhonored and unnoticed by them."

And such is actually the case—the power of the Orange faction has passed away forever—the days of the Protestant ascendancy are with those beyond the flood—the memory of the functionaries who so unjustly wielded their power is branded with opprobrium, and their names are only remembered at all to be used as bywords of reproach and execration, while that of Father Sheehy is enshrined in the inmost hearts of the people, and is ever music to their ears. It only remains for us to thank heaven that Tipperary in 1850* has seen the glorious revival of Catholic splendor, and that the Synod of Thurles has redeemed the glory of that good, old, faithful county, where the national religion was so oppressed and trampled on, and its children so cruelly persecuted *Eighty Years Ago*.

* This was written in 1851.

The following stanzas, translated from the Irish, have been kindly sent us from Worcester, Massachusetts. Hoping that they may not be uninteresting to those who have been following "The Fate of Father Sheehy" in our columns, we give them almost *verbatim*. The translation was made, our correspondent states, by a member of the family of the lamented Father Sheehy. It seems that his sister, almost bereft of reason, had been watching for twenty years the mouldering head of her martyred brother which stood on a high pole in front of Clonmel jail. Many applications had been made to have the head removed, but in vain. At the end of that long period of time the devoted sister succeeded in stealing the head by night whilst a raging storm kept the sentries in the shelter of their boxes. So the story goes in Tipperary, and on it these verses appear to have been founded. As the friend to whom we are indebted for them justly remarks, "they must have been touchingly sweet and mournful in the grand old tongue of our Celtic sires."

TO FATHER SHEEHY'S HEAD—FOR TWENTY YEARS EXPOSED
IN FRONT OF CLONMEL JAIL.

Head of the martyr'd priest, I now can hold thee!
Thus to my lips, and to my heart I fold thee!
On Clonmel's gates, while soldiers lay a-dreaming
I watch'd the fatal spike thro' darkness gleaming.

Martyr'd to Erin's cause by men unholy,
Martyr'd like Christ his Lord for justice solely,

Dark doom of grief to many a mother's daughter,
From Knockmaoldown to Shannon's wide-spread water.

From Shannon of the ships and all its holy islands,
To Cashel of the Kings and its diocese of highlands,—†
Cork of the ancient sword and pointed arrow—‡
And *coppa ma chree* of the mound of sorrow—§

And where are they, dear head ! that once reviled thee ?—
Who spiked thee high and with filthy pitch defiled thee ?—
All pray'rs for pity spurn'd, scoff'd, and slighted—
They crush'd my heart, and left me old and blighted.

Sure of their doom, some died in madness, yelling||
Of Sheehy's quarter'd corpse, of Hell's dark dwelling ;
And some, oh righteous God ! impious and daring,
Pour'd forth their curs'd lives and died despairing.

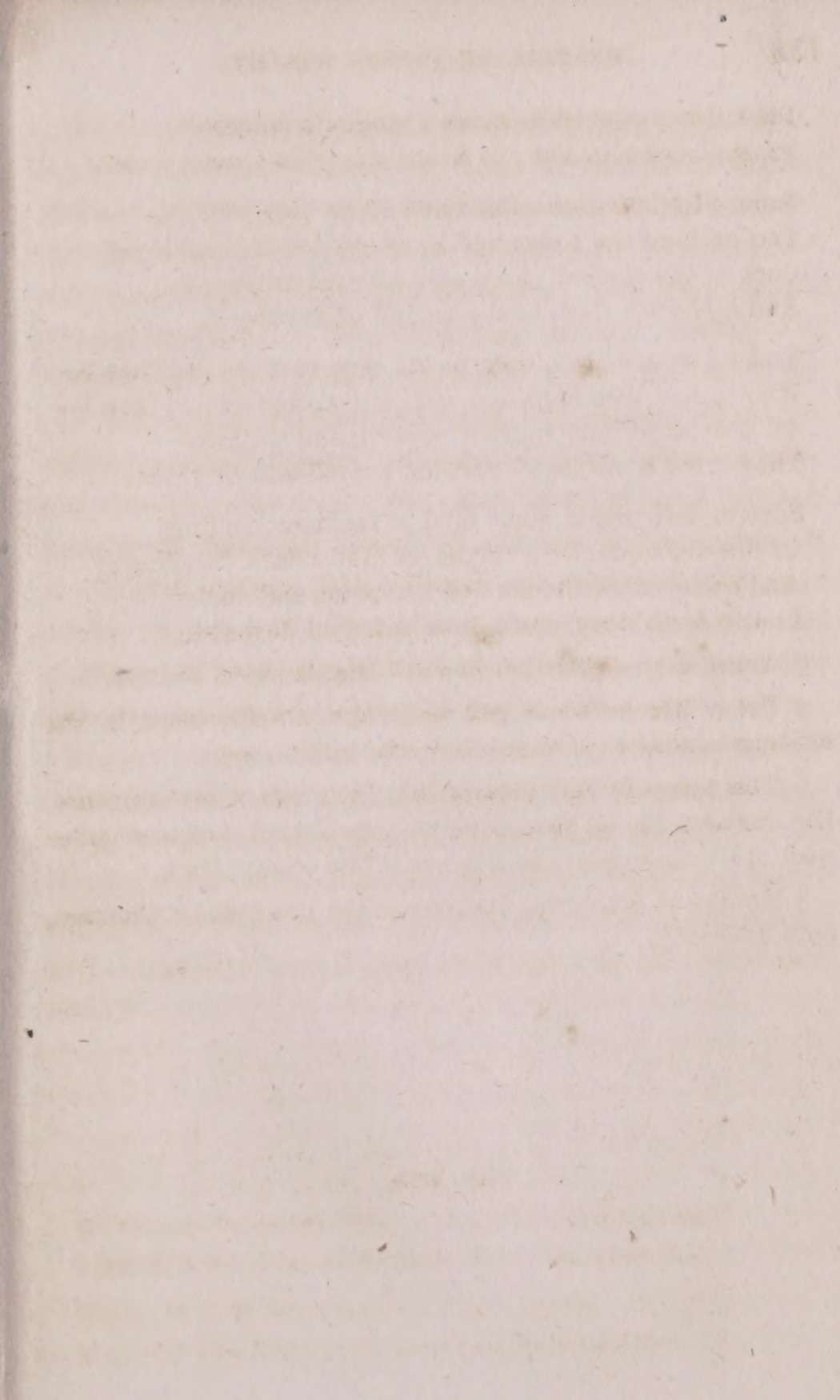
† Munster was called of old the " Highlands of Ireland."

‡ Brien Boroimhe's sword and arrow are deposited in the
museum of that city, where they may still be seen.

§ This seems to have reference to the place of his sepulture.
His remains lie in Shandraghan churchyard, fourteen miles
west of Clonmel, near the borders of the county Cork.

|| Maude, of Dundrum, and one of the Bagwells of Clonmel,
both died mad.

THE END.





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